

THE
Consistent Christian;

OR THE

Truth and Peace, Holiness, Unanimity,
Stedfastness, and Zeal, recommended
to Professors of Christianity.

THE SUBSTANCE OF
FIVE SERMONS.

By DAN TAYLOR.

To which is prefixed,

A BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF THE

Author's Removal from *Wadsworth* to *Halifax*.

*Ye were sometimes Darkness, but now are
Ye Light in the Lord. Walk as Children of Light.*
EPHES. V. 8.

L E E D S.

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*T*O all Professors of Christianity, particularly
to my dear Brethren in Wadsworth, and
the adjacent Neighbourhoods, among whom
I have spent the most active Part of my Life,
and whose Felicity is Matter of my earnest Prayer,
the following Pages, the Substance of which hath
been addressed to them from the Pulpit, are in-
scribed and dedicated, by their very affectionate
Brother, and

Ready Servant,

For 'Jesus' Sake,



DAN TAYLOR.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT

Of the Author's Removal from
WADSWORTH to HALIFAX.

UNWORTHY of notice as I am,
my removal to Halifax has been
the subject of much conversation among
some of those who have been informed
of it. It has been ascribed to several
causes. Many have enquired, and
some have a right to know, what the
real cause is. These are desired to
read with attention and candor the
following general account of the matter.

I never had any desire, so far as I
remember, to be a Minister at Halifax.
On several accounts, I should have
preferred almost any other place, if I
had wished to leave Wadsworth, which
I don't recollect that I ever did. As

to pecuniary advantages, or any kind of secular emoluments, any one who knows the state of our interest at Halifax, must be sensible these could not be any inducement. If I had wished for these, I should certainly have removed to some other people, as, it is well known, I might have done.

*Nor did the people at Halifax ever attempt to persuade me to leave Wadsworth, and go to them. Nor did they ever, that I know of, express any desire for this, unless upon mature and impartial deliberation, it should appear to wise and disinterested men, to be upon the whole, most likely to advantage the cause of Christ, and promote the happiness of mankind; and consequently to be my duty, according to that great apostolic rule, "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."— This alone, they professed to regard as
the*

the test, by which they desired the affair to be tried, and the hinge on which they would have it turn.

Now it has, for some years past, been apprehended by many who appear very well qualified to judge in the case, that, all circumstances considered, such a remove was very likely to contribute to the advancement of our blessed Redeemer's interest. This has also been frequently suggested to the people at Halifax, by persons of other persuasions, as well as of our own persuasion. This was referred to the judgment of a large number of ministers and others, at our annual association, in 1782. And after considering the matter, they very unanimously advised my brethren at Wadsworth to consent to my removal.

Since that time, the case has been
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laid

laid before several others, both ministers and private christians ; and we have had many meetings concerning it, and have spent much time in consulting, and praying for divine direction, with respect to it. And I myself have taken much pains, both in reading authors, in literary correspondence, and in personal conference with no small number of my acquaintance, in order to know the opinions both of the living and the dead, in cases of this nature, and I can truly say have often accompanied this labor with earnest addresses at the throne of grace, for that “wisdom which is profitable to direct.”

After this labor had been continued for some months, the matter was again referred to a considerable number of our ministers, at a quarterly conference, and they were desired to reconsider it. And whatever we had been able to collect, that appeared import-

ant, both against the remove, and in favor of it, was laid before these ministers at that time. This was done by the consent of both parties, that is, both the people at Wadsworth, and those at Halifax. Upon re-consideration of the subject, the ministers above-mentioned still continued to give their judgment in favor of my removal.

I have been invariably passive in the matter from the beginning of the discussion of it ; feeling, as I humbly hope, thro' rich grace, a sincere desire to be any thing or nothing that my Lord and Saviour may be glorified, and his interest advanced in the world.

The result of this was, that the people at Wadsworth came to this conclusion, that the matter should be referred, as much as possible, to the determination of Providence. They therefore

agreed that I should labor chiefly at Halifax for six months; and if it appeared, at the end of this period, that the removal was likely to accomplish the desired end, I should continue to labor there; but if not, I should return to my beloved flock at Wadsworth.

I here beg leave to remark, by the way, that though I am not fond of spending time in compliments and encomiums, yet I will venture to say, that all circumstances considered, and especially considering the mutual endearments that have long subsisted between me and my Wadsworth brethren, I look upon the disposition manifested in this agreement, and the cordiality with which many of them came into it, as one of the best evidences I expect to be favoured with on this side heaven, that my poor labors among them have not been "in vain in the Lord." All who attentively read the

scriptures must know speculatively, and the true believer knows by experience, that a readiness to part with our dearest comforts, when required for the sake of Christ, is that temper which the Lord requires of all his disciples, and which the gospel effectually produceth in all those in whom it savingly takes place.

At the end of six months, the matter was again referred to the judgment of the associated ministers and brethren, in the present year, 1783; when, having considered the state of both the churches, they once more gave it as their judgment, with great unanimity, and in a very positive manner, that so far as we can judge from circumstances, there is great reason to believe that my removal to Halifax is likely, thro' the blessing of God, to issue in the advancement of our Saviour's interests, while my brethren at Wadsworth are

very well supplied, with a minister in my absence, who may "feed them with knowledge and understanding." This account of the matter is very short and general; but as exact and simple as I know how to lay it before the reader. May the God of our salvation be glorified in every step we take below! And may our one design on earth be to serve him, who "spared not his only begotten son, but freely delivered him for us all." The contents of the following pages were delivered to my dear Wadsworth friends, with enlargements, in five discourses, before my leaving them, to labor six months at Halifax upon trial! So far as they accord with the sacred oracles, may they be reduced to practice by all the churches of Christ.

D. TAYLOR.

WADSWORTH, }
 Aug. 20, 1783. }

T H E
Consistent Christian, &c.

ZECH. viii. 19.

Love the Truth and Peace.

“**R**IGHTEOUSNESS exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people,”* is a sacred aphorism uttered by the wisest of men, under the “inspiration of God;”† and the truth of it might be evinced from the history of all ages; but particularly from the oracles of infallible truth. Who can avoid observing the illustration of it in the iniquities and consequent miseries of Amalek and Moab, of Babylon and Tyre, and of other nations; whose rebellion against the Lord *Jehovah*, and whose punishment, in consequence of that rebellion, are so circumstantially recorded in the bible? How easy, especially, is it to read both the truth and the meaning of it, in the dispensations

* Prov. xiv. 34. † 2 Tim. iii. 16.

fations of providence towards Israel ! Let their journey through the wilderness of Arabia, from Egypt to Canaan, and their oppressions by the various nations around them, during the time of the judges, before there was " any King in Israel," be consulted in this view. Let us also appeal to the captivity of seventy tedious years, as a testimony to the truth of the aphorism first mentioned. * " All the
 " chief of the priests and the people," we are informed by the sacred historian, " transgressed very much after all the
 " abominations of the heathen ; and polluted the house of the Lord, which he
 " had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the
 " Lord God of their fathers sent to them
 " by his messengers, rising up betimes
 " and sending ; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling
 " place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words,
 " and mis-used his prophets, until the
 " wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the King of
 " the Chaldees, who slew their young men
 " with the sword in the house of their
 " sanctuary, and had no compassion upon
 " young man or maiden, old man, or him
 " that

* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—22.

“ that stooped for age. He gave them
“ all into his hand. And all the vessels
“ of the house of God, great and small,
“ and the treasures of the house of the
“ Lord, and the treasures of the kings
“ and of his princes; all these he brought
“ to Babylon. And they burnt the house
“ of God, and brake down the wall of
“ Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces
“ thereof with fire, and destroyed all the
“ goodly vessels thereof. And them that
“ had escaped from the sword carryed he
“ away to Babylon; where they were ser-
“ vants to him and his sons, until the
“ reign of the kingdom of Persia. To
“ fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth
“ of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed
“ her sabbaths: for as long as she lay de-
“ solate she kept sabbath, to fulfil three-
“ score and ten years.”

Thus the nation of Judah was taken captive by the great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, and continued in the hands of the Chaldeans, till the reign of his grandson, Belshazzar; in whose reign Cyrus, who, at that time, commanded the Persian army, made a successful attack upon Babylon, slew Belshazzar, the king, and took possession of it, as the prophet Daniel informs us.* Cyrus afterwards came

* Dan. v. 30, 31.

came to the throne of Persia himself; and under him the kingdoms of the Medes and Persians were united in one empire, the vast territories of the Chaldeans, and other conquered nations were added to it, so that it consisted of one hundred and twenty; and afterwards of one hundred and twenty seven provinces.* Thus the captives of Judah were now in the hands of Cyrus.

“ And the Lord stirred up the spirit of
“ Cyrus the King of Persia, and he made
“ a proclamation throughout all his king-
“ dom, and put it also in writing. Thus
“ saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord
“ God of heaven hath given me all the
“ kingdoms of the earth; and he hath
“ charged me to build him an house at
“ Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who
“ is there among you of all his people?
“ his God be with him, and let him go
“ up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah,
“ and build the house of the Lord God
“ of Israel, (he is the God) which is at
“ Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth
“ in any place, where he sojourneth, let
“ the men of the place help him with sil-
“ ver, and with gold, and with goods,
“ and with beasts, besides the free-will-
“ offering for the house of God, that is
“ in Jerusalem.” “ Then rose up the
“ chief.

* Compare Esther i. 1. Dan. vi. 1.

“ chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the Priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.”* But while they attempted to rebuild the temple and the city, they were harassed and perplexed by the Samaritans; and partly on this account, and partly through the negligence of the Jews themselves, the work ceased till the second year of Darius the son of Hystaspes. §

In the second year of Darius, the two prophets, Zechariah and Haggai were commissioned of God to rouse and encourage the people to hasten the work, and exert themselves in it. † And almost two years after this, the Jews sent two principal men, Sherezer and Regem-melech, to consult with the priests and the prophets, respecting the fasts which had been observed among them during their captivity, whether these fasts should still be continued or not. ‡ These fasts were kept in four different months, and on four different occasions. One in the *fourth* month, because in that month, the city Jerusalem was evacuated, or *broken up*, by reason of the

* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23. Ezra i. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

§ See Ezra iv. v. Hag. i. Zech. i. † Zech. i. 1. Hag. i. 1. ‡ Zech. vii. 1, 2, 3, &c.

the grievous famine that was caused by the siege of the Chaldean army, which army, upon this, pursued and took Zedekiah the king of Judah.* Another in the *fifth* month, because in this month, Nebuzaradan, the king of Babylon's General, burnt the city and the temple.† Another in the *seventh* month, for the murder of Gedaliah, by Ishmael; which Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar had made governor of those people who continued in the land of Judah, at the beginning of their captivity.‡ And lastly, one in the *tenth* month, because Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of the city in that month.‡ This siege continued about *nineteen* months, and ended in the entire conquest and ruin of Jerusalem.

In answer to the enquiry of the two men above-mentioned, Sherezer and Regem-melech, after giving them proper instructions and reproofs, our prophet assures them, that the fasts they had so long kept, should be turned into feasting. "Thus
 "saith the Lord of hosts; the fast of the
 "fourth month, and the fast of the fifth,
 "and the fast of the seventh, and the fast
 "of the tenth, shall be to the house of
 "Judah.

* See 2 Kings, xxv. 3, 4. Jer. xxxix. 2. lii. 6, 7.

† Comp. 2 Kings, xxv. 8, 9. Jer. lii. 12, 13.

‡ Zech. vii. 3. † 2 Kings, xxv. 22. Jer. xli. 1.

‡ Jer. lii. 4. 2 Kings, xxv. 1.

“Judah joy and gladness, and chearful
“feasts, therefore love the truth and
“peace.” As if he had said, “you shall
now no longer spend your time in fasting
and sorrow, but in joy and festivity; you
shall abound with plenty, and prosperity
shall attend you.” Therefore now be di-
ligent in observing the directions of your
God, “Love the truth and peace.” I
take it for granted the advice here given
is applicable to myself, and my present
audience, and necessary for us to observe,
as well as the ancient Jews. I beg leave,
therefore to call your diligent attention to
it. In order to improve it in as profitable
a manner as I can, with a view to my pre-
sent design; I ask leave to divide it into
two distinct parts, and consider it as con-
taining a two-fold exhortation. Love the
truth,—and love *peace*.

With regard to the first, let us consider
—what is meant by truth, proposed as the
object of our love and esteem, what this
truth contains in it, and to what it ex-
tends,—the use and importance of the
truth, according to the interpretation of
the word which will be given,—and how
we are to manifest our love and esteem
for it.

I. I beg leave to call your attention to
the truth, here proposed, as the object of
your love and esteem. In

In the new testament, our blessed Saviour calls himself *the Truth*.* This appellation belongs to him, as he is the *true* substance of the Jewish types and shadows, which were intended to them, as emblematical representations of him, and of the blessings that flow from him to believers. § He is also the author and fountain of *truth*, in all things that relate to the happiness of man. He only gives *true* and solid satisfaction to a soul oppressed with a sense of sin, and enquiring after everlasting felicity. He was likewise the great “teacher sent from God,” to give a full account of his heavenly Father’s will to us poor ignorant sinners; and to give us those *true* and infallible directions in the way to heaven, which whoever follows, will assuredly arrive safe at the regions of never-ending glory. In this sense, he is *the truth*, in opposition to all the errors we have imbibed, through the native darkness of our minds, the wildness of our fancies, the corruptness of our education, our connections in life, and the traditions of men, by which we are continually surrounded, and too frequently ensnared. But it does not appear that this appellation is ever given to our Lord in the old testament; or that the prophet has here any particular regard to,

* John xiv. 6. § Compare Col. ii. 17. Heb. x. 1.

to him. And therefore, though he is the chief object of love; though he demands our highest esteem, as "the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely," we cannot apply the text immediately to him; nor does my present design call me to consider the subject in this view.

Again: Truth frequently signifies the exact conformity of our words with the facts we relate, and the subjects we speak of; and in this sense, stands in opposition to lying, equivocation, and all mental reserves of every kind, when we are called to give testimony respecting civil or religious matters, as well as in common conversation. And in this sense, *the truth* is highly worthy of our love and esteem; while *lying*, in all its various forms, ought to be regarded with detestation and abhorrence, as the bane of correspondence and commerce: as that which renders us like the old serpent, the devil, who is "the father of lies," and has been a liar from the beginning. Lies discover the author or propagator of them to be unfit for the society of mankind, and a nuisance in the world; and finally, we are assured, in the most positive manner, by infallibility itself, that "all liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

* Rev. xxi. 8.

How awfully extensive is this expression, "*All liars !*" Some lie for worldly profit ; some for fear ; some to excite merriment ; some in conformity to others ; but whatever is the motive or design, they must all, without repentance, have their place in a flaming hell ; for " the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." In this sense *truth* is frequently understood in scripture ; and several expressions in the chapter where my text lies, seem to countenance this application of the text itself. But I confess I do not see any incontestible proof that we ought thus to apply it, and, much less, confine it to this only. And such application of it would be a little alien from my present design ; as I wish in this discourse, to recommend *the truth* to your warmest attention and esteem in a different point of light.

The truth, then, frequently signifies the *real* and *genuine* revelation which the blessed God has been pleased to make of himself and his will to mankind. This he formerly revealed by his prophets ; and afterwards, by his son Jesus, and those whom he commissioned to " go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."* And they were endowed with such powers to work miracles, and foretel
future

* Mar. xvi. 16.

future events, as gave the most incontestible evidence to upright and attentive minds, that they were messengers sent from God, and that their message was divine. Their writings and discourses are now put together, by divine direction, in that book we emphatically call the *scriptures*, which book carries along with it the most irrefragable marks that "God is the author of it." Now since the canon of scripture was completed, what is contained in the bible, with regard to ourselves, to the blessed God, the way of salvation, or the duties incumbent on mortals, is eminently, and most justly called THE TRUTH in general, though this application is sometimes more immediately applied to the *gospel*, or that part of scripture which reveals the love and grace of God to sinful and miserable man.*

Truth, thus considered, is contradistinguished to all mere opinions and sentiments, and opposed to all human traditions and inventions, and to every thing advanced or enjoined by others, without a "thus saith the Lord," to support it.

I will not positively affirm this is the meaning

* In the former and more general sense the word is used Psal. cxix. 142. Isai. xxvi. 2. John xvii. 17, &c. &c. In the latter, Ephes. i. 13. Col. i. 5. 2 Thes. ii. 10—12, 13, and many other places.

meaning of the prophet in the words now before me. But as this interpretation of the words is a very important and scriptural one, I beg leave, as most agreeable to my present design, thus to apply and consider them in the following discourse. I therefore, proceed farther to observe what *the truth*, thus understood, contains in it, and to what it extends.

1. The great characteristic of truth, in sacred matters, is, that "the Lord hath spoken it." The word of the Lord is our *only* guide, and it is our *perfect* guide and directory in all matters of religion, both respecting faith and practice. Whatever cannot be found expressed or implied in that divine book, whatever cannot by fair, obvious, allowed rules of reasoning or interpretation, be deduced from it, is not to be admitted as truth; and whensoever, wheresoever, or by whomsoever asserted, it is to be rejected with a holy indignation, by all who desire to be "taught of God," or led in the safe way to glory. "Thou art that God, and thy words be true," was the address of holy David to his maker.* And a greater than David, even he who is the root and offspring of David, in his last prayer with his disciples, says to his heavenly Father, "thy word is truth."†—
Whatsoever

* 2 Sam. vii. 28.

† John xvii. 17.

Whatsoever is not contained in the sacred oracles, though it be not evidently *contrary* to them, is to be laid aside as a mere opinion or sentiment, and consequently as a matter of no weight in religion at all, and no way belonging to mortals; for “secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but things that are revealed belong to us and to our children, to do all the words of this law.”* And whoever advances or recommends this, ought to be reminded of that ancient piece of wholesome advice, “add not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”† If what is asserted, or recommended to practice be *contrary* to scripture, it is to be rejected with sacred abhorrence, as a contradiction to the Most High, and can have no tendency but to poison and ruin the souls of men.

2. *Truth* considered in this extensive sense, includes whatever is declared in scripture, as necessary to be known and believed, or recommended to our attention there, as needful to be performed in every circumstance of life.

As to doctrine; whatever is recorded respecting the nature and perfections of God the Father, his wisdom, his power, his holiness, or grace, &c.—respecting the
blessed

* Deut. xxix. 29. † Prov. xxx. 6.

blessed Redeemer, his nature, his person, his offices, his work ; the capacity in which he stood when here on earth, in the days of his flesh ; the blessings he procured for guilty men ; the number, the character, the state, of those for whom he laid down his precious life ; the way to be happy by him ; or the dignity, personality, or operations of the holy spirit ; and whatever relates to the salvation and happiness, or to the damnation and misery of mortals, it is all contained in *the truth*. Whatever is conjectured without scripture evidence, is utterly insignificant and useless ; and whatever is contrary to scripture, is to be regarded as error and falsehood, and in proportion to its influence on our minds, tempers, and lives, is destructive to the souls of those who receive it ; as will be more manifest under the next head of discourse.

As to any branch of duty ; whatever is recommended to our practice in the word of God, the observance of it is a matter of infinite consequence ; because, by being contained in scripture, it is stamped with authority of infinite weight. *The truth*, in point of *duty*, contains in it, whatever we ought to perform in secret, or in public life ; towards our glorious Creator, or any of our fellow-creatures ; in civil
or

or religious matters ; in the closet, the family, the church, or the world. In this extensive sense, I wish to be understood, when speaking of the *truth*, in the following remarks ; though several of them, as well as of the scriptures referred to, may more eminently respect the *gospel*, or that special part of scripture which reveals the rich grace of God to miserable sinners, and is, indeed, included in *the truth*, thus largely understood, but not the whole of it.

II. Let us then consider the use and importance of *the truth*, that we may more clearly apprehend the value of it, and more cordially love and esteem it.

I. Consider the author of *the truth*.---

“ All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”* The dignity of him who speaks is allowed to be one consideration which demands our regard to what is spoken. Thus the same advice, direction, or counsel, delivered by a prince, is considered as more weighty, than if it was delivered by a mean peasant. “ Where the word of a king is, there is power.”§ The Lord is the king of heaven and earth. And certainly his words have power enough in them to fill with an awful solemnity, to please, and to attract the attention of all

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* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

§ Eccles. viii. 4.

the inhabitants of universal nature. The truths of scripture are all the product of perfect wisdom ; and all proceed from him whose " understanding is infinite." Every thing amiable and delightful presents itself to our view, when, by faith, we behold the blessed God. And every thing lovely, desirable, and substantially profitable, is contained in his precious word of *truth*. " God is love." He has declared this of himself, and made it manifest in all his works ; but especially, in the astonishing gift of his dear son, to expire on the cross for a lost world. And when he vouchsafes to speak to his creatures, shall his declarations be slighted, or his commands and directions trifled with ? God forbid ! The words of such a Being should be our " meditation day and night."* Let us " hide them in our hearts, that we may not sin against him."§

2. The gracious end for which it is given, and the suitableness and ability of it to accomplish that end, should recommend *the truth* to our most affectionate regard and esteem. We, by sin, are exposed to endless condemnation and misery. For " the wages of sin is death."† Whatever is designed and calculated to recover us from our fall and ruin, is certainly

* Psal. i. 2. § Psal. cxix. 11. † Rom. vi. 23.

tainly "worthy of all acceptation,"* and ought to be received with the most unfeigned gratitude of mind, and loved with all our hearts. Such is *the truth* of God, contained in his blessed word, especially the *gospel*. What is recorded of the blessed Jesus, saith the beloved disciple, was "written that ye might believe that Jesus is the son of God, and, that believing, ye might have life through his name."§ What can delight our minds, what can rejoice our hearts, what can attract our attention, in comparison of that book which is given by the "God of all grace," to restore us, poor, condemned, ruined creatures to the enjoyment of present and everlasting life and joy?

And the word of God is capable of answering the end for which it is given. His wisdom forbids him to give his word for a purpose which it is not able to accomplish. We are, therefore, assured that the gospel is "the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth."† "Lay aside," saith the apostle James, "all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness, the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls."‡

3. The truth of God, is, in fact, efficacious

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cious

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

§ John xx. 21.

† Rom. i. 16.

‡ Jam. i. 21.

cious to accomplish this glorious purpose, wherever it is received, and takes lasting place in the mind. "The entrance of it giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."* "Of his own will begat he us, by the *word of truth*,"§ is the devout acknowledgment of an inspired apostle. And another, who was under the same infallible direction, observes, that the saints are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, which liveth and abideth for ever,—even that word, which by the gospel is preached unto you."† "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."‡ The gospel was formerly, though not with equal perspicuity and evidence, preached to the carnal Israelites, in the wilderness, with whom the blessed God was grieved forty years, and to whom he swore in his wrath, that, on account of their continued infidelity and iniquity they should not enter into his rest. "To them was the gospel preached, as well as to us; but the word preached did not profit them."

What

* Psal. cxix. 130.

23—25.

§ James i. 18.

† 1 Pet. i.

‡ Psal. xix. 7, 8.

What was the reason of this? The apostle informs us; "Because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it."* Even Satan himself is aware of this; and therefore when the word is preached, he artfully watcheth his opportunity, against poor sinners, and too often "taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."§ If the blessed word of God be given to such glorious ends, and effectual to such divine purposes, shall we not then love and esteem it? Shall any thing on earth be equally, be comparably dear to our souls? Shall not all our powers unite in acknowledging to the praise and glory of its infinitely great, holy, and wise author, that "it is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold? Shall not all who know its efficacy confess that it is sweeter than honey and the honey comb?"†

4. By the truth of God, contained in his word, the believer makes advances in faith, in love, in comfort, and in every part of holiness. And therefore the saints are exhorted "as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby."‡ The use and value of divine truth in this view, seems to have

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been.

Compare Heb. iii. 17, 18. 19. iv. 2. § Luke
viii. 12. † Psal. xix. 10. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 2.

been a great support to the mind of the apostle, in his most affectionate farewell to the Ephesian Elders. "And now, brethren," says he, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."* There is every thing in the word of truth, that is necessary for the promotion of our prosperity in holiness and comfort. Every doctrine to instruct, and every promise to encourage and support under the heaviest trials and burthens; with every imaginable inducement to "run with patience the race that is set before us," and, "forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to the things which are before; to press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling, of God in Christ Jesus."§ Amidst all his weakness, and struggles with Satan, with the world, and with inbred sin, the believer is still comforted with the full assurance from the word of infallible truth, that "the grace of Christ is sufficient for him," and that, in all these things, he shall be "more than conqueror through him who loved him."† Does he stand in need of spiritual strength, quickening and comfort;

* Acts xx. 32.

§ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

† Rom.

viii. 37. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

fort; he is taught in the tenderest manner, and with the fullest assurance, that his heavenly father is ever ready, with more than parental love and tenderness, "to give his holy spirit to them that ask him."* And while, after all, he will certainly be apprehensive of various defects, he has the comfort of being "accepted in the beloved," and of being "complete in him who is the head of all principality and power;"§ and that the Lord Jesus is, of God, "made to him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."† In a word; the *truth* of God affords every encouragement, every consolation and support, and every stimulating inducement to walk on his way, with joy, towards his heavenly father's house above, and to sing, as he marches forwards,

"He that hath lov'd us bears us through;
And makes us more than conqu'rors too."

Dr. WATTS.

Thus the *truth* of God is the support of the soul. Does the appetite relish delicious food? Does the new-born babe love the milk of its mother's breast? Surely then, all who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," will love and esteem the nourish-

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ing,

* Luke xi. 13.

§ Ephes. i. 6. Col. ii. 10.

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

ing, comforting, quickening, supporting *truth* of God.

5. The *truth* of God is a safe, and the *only* safe directory in the way of holiness, and shews us what is right and wrong in all the several branches of doctrine and duty, through every scene of life. By nature we are full of dreadful darkness with regard to the things of God, and the way to be happy. The heathen "world by wisdom knew not God."* Nor should we be at all superior to them, were it not that we are instructed by the oracles of infallible truth. Hence it is an incontestible fact, that in those parts, and even in those families where the scriptures are not attentively read, the will of God is not known, nor have the inhabitants any knowledge how mankind are made happy, more than the inhabitants of heathen countries, except by some unconnected traditions, and common reports, and both reason and fact shew that it cannot be otherwise, to any who disregard the bible. For "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." Hence also it evidently comes to pass, that many things approved in scripture, are condemned as wrong; and many things condemned in scripture, are approved, both in matters of religion
and

* 1 Cor. I, 21.

and morality, for no other reason than because they have been accustomed to hear, or to think the contrary. But the word of the Lord is a "lamp to our feet, and a light to our path."* It answers, in this dark world, the purpose of a lamp in a dark room, or a lantern to one that walks in a dark night. By the word of God the christian may know where he is walking, how far he is advanced in conformity to his great pattern, and wherein he is defective. He can discover the snares and dangers which lie in his road to heaven, and how to avoid them. He can "ponder the path of his feet,"§ and "remove his foot from evil," and thereby through divine assistance, which he is encouraged to pray for, and sure to receive, he can escape those follies which "grieve the holy spirit of God, whereby he is sealed to the day of redemption."† For the word of God, which he makes his daily companion, and in which "he meditates day and night," is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."‡ Surely then, every one who desires to enjoy solid peace of mind,

to.

* Psal. cxix. 105. § Prov. iv. 26, 27. † Ephes. iv. 32. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

to honor his gracious father, to be an example to others, or to "lay up treasure in heaven," will most cordially and affectionately *love the truth*.

6. What is performed in religious worship according to the *truth* of God, is acceptable to him, and what is not done according to his direction, but is a tradition or invention of men, is disapproved by him, and of no use to him who performs it. This is very evident from the nature of things, from the disposition of all *masters*; and from the relation in which they stand to their *servants*; and it is most awfully demonstrated in the case of *Aaron's* sons, who "took either of them a censor, and put fire thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he COMMANDED them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, this is that which the Lord spake, saying, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."* And it is positively confirmed by our blessed Saviour, when, to evince the iniquity and folly of the Jewish traditions, he says, "in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." §
Would

• Lev. x. 1, 2, 3.

§ Mat. xv. 9.

Would we then worship the blessed God, so as to enjoy his blessing and presence, rather than his frown, let his command be the foundation of all our worship, and let us hereby prove that we *love the truth*.

It can never be that an untruth should be attended with the divine approbation and blessing; or that any doctrine or practice, which is not stamped with the authority of God, should be owned by him, to advance his interest and kingdom. It is absurd to imagine that the holy and jealous sovereign of the universe should smile on that which does not come from himself, or that he should employ falsehoods to convert sinners, or to edify his saints; or that he should countenance what we assert, enjoin, or perform in contempt of his word, or even in the neglect of it, however it may be approved by our fellow-mortals; whatever be their rank, station or dignity. Hence he so positively chargeth his prophets and preachers, under both dispensations, to speak his word, and to teach according to that, without any alteration, addition, or diminution. "Hear the word at my mouth"---"speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord. He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear."*

"If

“ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”* “ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book : If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book : And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.”§ May these awful words duly affect our hearts, and prepare us to enquire,

III. In what manner our love and esteem for *the truth* ought to be manifested.

1. Seek earnestly to know what is *truth*, and to be well established in every part of it. If it be of such vast use and value, as we have seen it is, certainly it deserves all our labor to come to the knowledge and possession of it. “ The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all things you can desire are not to be compared to her.”† “ Search the scriptures,”‡ which are the fountain of it, and the depositum, in which this sacred and invaluable

* 1 Pet. iv. 11. § Rev. xxii. 18, 19. † Prov.
iii. 14, 15. ‡ John v. 39.

able treasure is laid up for every honest diligent enquirer. Remember the honourable testimony which the holy spirit gives of the Bereans, who when they heard the apostles preach, they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* Be not afraid to imitate these noble and illustrious men. Their conduct is stamped with the approbation of heaven. Let nothing deter you from the imitation of it. Take nothing upon trust, from me or from any preacher or writer in the universe. Be thankful for all the assistance they give you. But be careful that nothing take place in your mind as *truth*, which hath not a "Thus saith the Lord" to support it. Search the scriptures with earnest prayer for divine illumination and direction. Cry at the Lord's feet, with an ancient, eminent saint, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."§ Breathe out, in your own behalf, the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory

* Acts xvii, 11. § Psal. cxix, 18.

glory of his inheritance in his saints ; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”*

And make the scriptures the subject of your “ *meditation* day and night.”§ This is the employment of him whom David pronounces a *blessed man*. Let it be your employment. Remember how the Psalmist came to have “ more understanding than all his teachers.” He himself gives the reason. “ For thy testimonies are my meditation.”† I exhort you to pursue the same method, and labor hereby to have more understanding than all they who teach you. Don’t trifle in this glorious pursuit. Dig deep into these rich mines of sacred intelligence, that the “ word of Christ may dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.”‡ Thus you will manifest your love and regard for the truth ; and may hope to arrive at an established knowledge of it.

2. When you speak on sacred subjects, take care that you *speak* according to truth. Whether your conversation be with friends or with foes ; whether your interviews be stated or occasional ; whoever asks your advice ; whether you instruct your families,

* Ephes. i. 17, 18, 19.
cxix. 99.

§ Psal. i. 2.
† Col. iii. 16.

† Psal.

lies, or meet for consultation with christian friends, remember this one rule, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."* Let these teach you all, and from these always "teach and admonish one another." If you don't know what the scripture teaches on the subject in question, don't you speak upon it. At least not with positivity. If you venture to speak at all, let it be with caution and diffidence, as a matter of mere sentiment, and not as a branch of *truth*. When we can talk at random in divine matters; when we can assert without evident scripture testimony, and recommend this or the other practice, as matter of duty, without divine authority to enforce it; we give very strong proof that we have but little real love for the truth. When this is our practice, it is much to be feared, that we are intent upon some carnal design, more fond of gaining credit to our own private opinions, or of promoting some party distinction, or human tradition, than "by manifestation of *the truth*, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."§

3. At all events steadfastly and resolutely *abide by* the truth, whatever you suffer by it; and that in every branch of it, both respecting

* 1 Pet. iv. 11.

§ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

specting principle and practice. “Buy *the truth*,” whatever it cost you. But “sell it not,”* though you could be possessed of all the treasures of the Indies, or of the universe, in exchange for it. It is, as we have seen already, a pearl of ineffable value, which can never be purchased too dear. And could you barter the least part of it for all that the world can afford, your sin would be great, and your loss would be irreparable. Your sin would be great—as you would hereby throw away a jewel so highly esteemed by the blessed God himself, and which he employs for such glorious purposes, in the conversion, the comfort, and the edification of men. And your loss would be irreparable; as you part with the best possessions enjoyed by mortals below the skies. The truth retained, and practically improved, will make you “rich towards God,” “rich in faith,” and “rich in good works.” And by a practical attention to it, you “lay up treasure in heaven,” which shall be your possession when “the earth, and all the works that are in it, shall be burnt up.” Be wise therefore, brethren, and “prove all things” by the sacred oracles; and “hold fast that which is good,”§ even though you could gain all the friendship, the

* Prov. xxiii. 23.

§ Thef. v. 21.

the honors, and riches of the world, in lieu of it.

Keeping the truth, and abiding by it, is so important that it is mentioned as a special part of the character of those who shall be admitted into the New Testament Church, in the prophet's admirable song on that subject, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth *the truth*," or the truths, "may enter in."* And the apostle mentions it as one of the marks or proofs of degeneracy and apostacy in the latter times, that the professors of christianity will "turn away their ears from *the truth*, and be turned unto fables."† And he exhorts Titus, "rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, which turn from the truth."‡ The martyrs are represented to John, as "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."§ Life itself is not to be compared with *divine truth*; and whoever, if providentially called to it, shall venture his life in defence and support of it, will assuredly find the advantage of it, when "God shall judge

* Isai. xxvi. 2. The Hebrew word is plural, אֱמוּנָה veritates, *truths*; and seems to intend all the several branches of truth, exhibited in the gospel.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 4. † Tit. i. 13, 14. ‡ Rev. vi. 9.

judge the secrets of men, according to the gospel."* Let all these considerations excite in you an ardent love to the truth; and a holy attention to the apostle's direction. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."§

4. Be valiant for *the truth*. Support it with prudence and meekness, according to the ability which God shall give you; and when it is needful, if you be capable of it, *contend* for it in love. There have always been opposers of it. Such there were in the time of the apostle Jude.—Hence he exhorts the brethren to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Far be it from me to encourage the noise and din of controversy; or to advise the friends of the truth to be perpetually fomenting contentions and disputes. These have seldom done good. They have frequently done much harm. Few common professors are qualified to be engaged in them. But every christian ought to be so well acquainted with his bible, as to be able to refer to the words or place of scripture where any truth or command is written, if requisite, in order to defend what he believes

* Rom. ii. 16.

§ Col. ii. 8.

believes or performs in religious matters. That contention is sometimes both allowable and heedful, the words of the apostle just mentioned, plainly shew; and the best and most useful method of contending generally is, to oppose error by the plain words of scripture, and insisting that the truth of God be regarded before the opinions and traditions of men. And most christians are qualified for little more than this.

VALOR for *the truth* is also made manifest by a ready and free acknowledgment of it on all proper occasions; and a constant endeavour to support it, by our presence and possessions, even in the sight of its greatest and warmest opposers. In this sense, as well as in the veracity of our conversation and transactions with men, it is our duty and honor to be "valiant for the truth upon the earth."* And that all the saints "strive together for the faith of the gospel,"§ as much as possible. For the church is the "pillar and ground of the truth;"† and appointed, under Christ, to maintain and support it in the world, for the glory of their Redeemer, the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints.

5. Shew your love to *the truth* by giving all the assistance you can, to propagate and

* Jer. ix. 3.

§ Phil i. 27.

† 1 Tim. iii. 15.

and extend the knowledge of it. *Common christians*, even *women*, can be helpful in this work, and some were so formerly; and seem to be particularly distinguished and commended on that account, by the great apostle Paul. "Help those women," says he, "who laboured with me in the gospel." And the apostle John observes, that we ought to receive such as go forth in the name of Christ," that we may be fellow-helpers to the truth.* Christians in common, may assist in the propagation of the truth, by various methods: By encouraging ministers to preach and expound it in every neighbourhood, where it can be made convenient; by endeavouring to excite their friends, neighbours, and relatives to hear it; by carefully instructing their families in the knowledge of it; the good effects of which may spread far and wide through many successive generations, by means of their descendants and servants; by taking all opportunities, as providence shall direct, to converse with neighbours, friends, or relatives, on scriptural subjects; by exerting themselves, to encourage, by their possessions, presence and labors, every eligible plan of making the gospel known among the ignorant, who otherwise would not hear it. We

* John iii. 8.

We ministers are under the strongest obligations to be indefatigably assiduous, by these, and all other practicable methods, to extend and propagate the knowledge of the truth; and we ardently request, and shall gratefully acknowledge all the assistance our people can give us in doing it. And we are assured that their "labors shall not be in vain in the Lord."* Even those who can do little more in this weighty affair, can pray for us, that we may be enabled by our great master so to "testify the gospel of the grace of God," in every place, and at all times, when it can be done with propriety, and that such a measure of *utterance*, and every other qualification may be given to us, that we may "open our mouths boldly," and "speak as we ought to speak," and that in his infinite mercy, he may succeed our feeble attempts to spread his truth, and advance his praise.

You can never be at a loss for motives, brethren, to awaken your diligence in this good and glorious work. Not to mention your own advantages both here, and at the great rewarding day; the honor of your blessed Saviour, who laid down his precious life for you, demands this and every other expression of gratitude. The
miserable

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

miserable condition of poor sinners, who are perishing in ignorance, in almost every corner, will certainly awaken your compassion for them, and lead you to seek their instruction and salvation. They, alas ! are lying in "darkness and the shadow of death;" and, according to the complaint of our condescending and compassionate God and Father, are "destroyed for lack of knowledge."* And can we be so far devoid of sympathy as not to feel a sacred anxiety that every christian method should be tried, that these poor blind creatures may be brought "to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved" through faith in the Lord Jesus ? But "how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? And how can they hear without a preacher?"§ Therefore

6. Endeavour to convert those to *the truth*, who err from it ; and especially, in the most important branches of it. "Brethren," says an ancient servant and friend of Christ ; "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him ; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."† It is the proper business of us who are ministers of the word, but it will be the honor

* Hos. iv. 6. § Rom. x. 14. † Jam. v. 19, 20.

of every christian, as far as he is able, “in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”* When a person has once known the truth, and again departs from it, he exposes himself to peculiar misery: “For it had been better for him not to have known the way of righteousness, than after he hath known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto him.”§

Compassionate the case of such pitiable creatures as these are, brethren; and use every method you can, to restore them to that *truth*, that gospel, which alone “is the power of God to their salvation,”† and by which alone, if they “*hold it fast*,” they shall certainly be saved.‡

7. Once more; shew your love to *the truth*, by reducing it to practice, and thus *adorning* it by a holy temper and conversation. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”|| Let every doctrine of it be practically improved, and every injunction seriously applied and practised. Let every part of the Lord’s will be chearfully and constantly observed, otherwise, as the apostle here intimates, your hopes of heaven are nothing

* 2 Tim. ii. 25. § 2 Pet. ii. 21. † Rom. i. 16.

‡ 2 Cor. xv. 2. || Jam. i. 22.

thing more or better than self-deception.

And by a holy conversation, you *adorn* the gospel, you are ornaments to *the truth*. When "servants shew all good fidelity," and consequently, when all other christians are faithful, punctual, and diligent in their respective stations and offices, they "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."* Whereas, on the other hand, if you follow "the pernicious ways" of carnal professors, "the way of truth" will be on your account, "evil spoken of."§ If, therefore, you neglect to reduce the doctrines of scripture to practice, if you be trifling in the performance of your Lord and Saviour's will, you are not the friends, but the enemies of *the truth*. As a conclusion to these exhortations and directions, I entreat your regard to the words of the great apostle to his beloved Philippians. "Brethren," says he, "be followers together of me, and mark them who walk so, as ye have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."†—
Take

* Tit. ii. 12.

§ 2 Pet. ii. 2.

† Phil. iii. 17, 18, 19.

Take care this character be not applicable to any of you.

Before I dismiss this important subject, I beg leave to remark, by way of improvement,

1. What reason we have to praise our good God for the word of truth! Every crumb of bread, every drop of water, every spark of fire, every waft of air, and every thread of raiment demands our grateful acknowledgments to the "God of all grace." But the word of truth is superior to these, and all earthly comforts, as the soul is superior to the body; as the heavens are above the earth. It is "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb."* It is "better than thousands of gold and silver."§ Here is deposited every treasure; from hence we may derive every advantage to enrich us, and make us substantially happy, in time, and through the ages of eternity. Here are infallible instructions on every sacred subject; promises suited to every case, directions how to pass honourably, and happily through every scene; and to manage every concern on this side the grave. It points out, in the most direct manner, the certain way to avoid the

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flames

* Psal. xix. 10. § Psal. cxix. 72.

flames of hell, and to obtain the glories and joys of heaven; and to lay up treasure of infinite value in that happy world, where all the saints shall dwell with their God and Saviour for evermore.

And what adds to the value of this blessed book, is, that the special fundamental parts of it are so very *plain*. For though there are lengths and breadths in it sufficient to employ the most improved and capacious understanding; and depths and heighths below what the profoundest wit can penetrate, and above the stretch of the most towering imagination; yet the "things that make for our peace," the things needful to be known and performed in order to our present and future happiness, are easy and plain to the meanest rational capacity, if we be willing to be "taught of God," and to follow his directions, as might be fully evinced, if time would admit, and the proof of it were necessary. The "way of holiness," the way that infallibly leads to heaven, is so clearly pointed out in it, that "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein,"* if they attend sincerely to this infallible book, and the directions given in it. Indeed, were it otherwise, how could we vindicate the blessed God, the
author

* Isai. xxxv. 8.

author of it, who has commanded the plowmen and common labourers to believe and practice it; and who condemns the unbelieving and disobedient with inflexible severity?*

2. Take care you don't, any of you, "put away the word of God from you."§ This was the sin and the ruin of the ancient Jews. Take heed that it be not your sin and ruin. By putting the word away from you, Sirs, you put away life, peace, comfort, God and heaven. You put away all that can do you good, or make you happy, through never-ending ages. Take care you slight not the truths of it. Remember the words of the apostle; "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."† NEGLECT not the salvation it exhibits. For "how shall we escape if we *neglect* so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord; and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."‡ Disobey not the directions of it;

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for

* See Mar. xvi. 16. Ephes. v. 6. with many other scriptures. § Acts xiii. 46. † 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12, ‡ Heb. ii. 3.

for "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."* And, to add no more on this point, remember that they, and they only are blessed, "who hear the word of God and keep it."§

3. Let all who profess to be the disciples of our blessed Saviour, conscientiously examine whether they be not guilty of too much slighting the truth of God, whether they shew their *love* to it, and esteem of it, as they ought, in the instances abovementioned. I beseech you to review them, and apply every particular to your own consciences. Do you daily search the scriptures, and meditate on them, and pray over them? Do you always take care to speak according to them on sacred subjects, or not to speak at all? Do you stedfastly and resolutely *abide* by the truths contained in them, and the duties they enjoin? Are you valiant
in

* 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9, 10.

§ See Luke xi. 23.

Mat. vii. 24—28.

in *support* and *defence* of the truth ? Do your labor, according to your capacities, to propagate it, and extend the knowledge of it ; and to give all possible assistance to ministers, in order that they may do this more effectually ? Do you endeavour to *recover* those who have *erred* from it ? And do you adorn it by a “ holy conversation, coupled with fear ?” If you be faithful and active in these particular respects, brethren, I praise God for it ; and I exhort you to go on, and “ be always abounding in the work of the Lord ;” for be ye assuredly persuaded that “ your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.” But if not, if you be growing slothful and indolent, I call you, in my great Master’s name, to humble yourselves at his feet, whose mercies you so wickedly slight ; and through divine assistance, begin *now* to exert yourselves, and determine henceforth to be attentive to the word of God, and to be “ valiant for the truth upon the earth.”

4. From what has been said, it appears that several deserters of the truth ought to stand condemned in their own consciences, and to acknowledge their guilt before God. By deserters, I mean, here, those who withdraw from any doctrine or duty, which they own to be according to scripture ; and do not continue to support it,

according to their capacity. To specify articles and instances of such wicked apostasy, does not, at present, appear to be necessary, nor consistent with my design, and intended brevity. But I may just mention a few of their inducements and motives. Some do it for fear of shame or loss, or of some real or supposed misery, that might arise from, or be consequent upon their faithful acknowledgment of the truth, or adherence to it: or, on the other hand, to obtain the friendship of men, or the riches or honors of this life. Forgetful, alas! that “if we suffer with our Saviour, we shall also reign with him; but if we deny him, he will also deny us.”* They unhappily prefer time to eternity; and venture upon the awful frowns of a jealous God, to obtain the smiles, and avoid the frowns of poor feeble worms. Others will forsake the truth, in some of its branches, from the offence they have taken at certain professors of it; evidently contrary to our Saviour’s own direction, § which, if attended to by all professors, would be of inexpressible advantage to their souls, and to the interest of religion; and which none can neglect, but from a manifest spirit of rebellion against the Lord

of

* Rom. viii. 17. 2 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 13.

§ The direction I mean is, is in Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17

of glory. Has Christ, the Lord and author of *the truth*, given them offence? Do their obligations to stand by it, arise from man? Or do offences received from men dissolve their obligations to Christ? Or has Jesus given them a licence to forsake the truth when the professors of it give them offence? If not, how will they appear at his bar, when he enquires "who hath required this at your hands?" Others again, will disown what they acknowledge to be the truth, because the ministers who are employed in the propagation of it, are poorer, less learned, or younger than others; or perhaps, they would wish another minister than that they at present have; as if their faith stood in "the wisdom of men," rather than in "the power of God."* What will such persons do when the scene is changed, and it pleases the blessed God to raise up different ministers on that side of the question which they esteem the side of truth? They must then, on their own principles, return again, and, by consequence, change sides, as ministers are celebrated and popular, or the contrary. And how contemptible such a conduct will render them must be obvious to every thinking person, and must be a manifest proof that their attach-

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ment

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

ment is to men rather than the truth of God. Besides, if the Lord raise up ministers, who are approved by his people, is it not an affront to him, and a virtual despising of his workmanship, when his truth is forsaken, in order to attend upon a more celebrated minister? And will it not appear, when "God shall bring every work to judgment," that these persons are seeking their own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's? * And therefore, though they are professedly the *friends*, they are really the *enemies* of the *truth*?

5. Let all who are earnestly and conscientiously struggling for the truth, and endeavouring to support and advance the interest of it, in the abovementioned instances, go on, and endeavour to be still more zealous and active for their Lord and Saviour; waiting patiently, amidst surrounding opposition, and various trials for the glorious recompence of reward.—Let all such remember the blessed Redeemer's promise, which he cannot fail to perform in due season. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." *

Thus

* Phil. ii. 21.

§ Rev. iii. 21.

Thus I have endeavoured to enforce the love of *the truth*, and proceed to recommend and enforce the second part of the exhortation;

LOVE PEACE.

Let us also here pursue nearly the same method with that we have taken on the former subject.

I. Let us state the sense in which we are here exhorted to *love peace*;—shew the worth and amiableness of peace thus understood, and with whom it ought to be cultivated.

II. Point out its connection with truth, and subordination to it.

III. Mention some of those methods by which all christians ought to manifest their love and esteem for it.

I. Let us state the sense of the word, or what peace we are here exhorted to love; shew the worth and amiableness of it; and with whom it ought to be cultivated.

There are three special senses in which the word *peace* is used by the sacred writers.

1. *Peace* with God; the happy effect of justification by faith. When the wrath of God, which “lies upon every unbeliever,”* is happily removed, and the guilty sinner is brought into a state of favor and friendship with his holy and gracious
Maker

* John iii. 36.

Maker and Sovereign. "Being justified by faith," says the apostle, "we have PEACE with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

2. A *peaceful*, calm, and holy serenity in our own consciences; the consequence and evidence of the former blessing; and maintained in the soul by a constant dependence on Jesus Christ, or on God through him.

Both the prophet and apostle evidently use the word in this sense, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect *peace* whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."§ "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and *peace* in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."† "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the *peace* of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."‡

3. Harmony and friendship among men; which stands opposed to broils and contentions, and whatever proceeds from malice, ill-nature, and resentment: This is a very common sense of the word throughout

* Rom. v. 1.

§ Isai. xxvi. 3.

† Rom. xv. 13.

‡ Phil. iv. 6, 7.

throughout the bible, as we shall see in the sequel of the present discourse. 'Tis in this sense, I understand the word in our text; and in this sense I wish to recommend the *love of peace*.

Proceed we then to shew the worth and amiableness of peace, as I have here explained it: On this head, I shall pursue a very plain and simple method; and shall do little more than refer to various passages of scripture, with a very short illustration when it appears necessary. Consider then,

That *peace* is frequently mentioned as a special blessing from God to a people or nation; and the want of it as a scourge or calamity. This is so manifest throughout the old testament, that I scarcely need to quote passages in proof of it. I mention two out of many. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid, &c."* "Seek ye the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the *peace* thereof shall ye have peace."§

The great and wise God, who is our best, glorious everlasting friend, who cannot enjoin what is wrong in itself, or injurious

* Lev. xxvi. 3—6.

§ Jer. xxix. 7.

jurious to his creatures, frequently commands and directs us to pursue peace, harmony, and friendship. A striking proof that his infinite wisdom esteems it very excellent and valuable. "Seek *peace*, and pursue it."* "Follow *peace* with all men."§ "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live *peaceably* with all men."†

Broils and contentions among men are so hateful in the sight of God, and peace is so amiable and valuable, that our blessed Saviour pronounces a special blessing upon those who, in a christian manner, are endeavouring to promote it. "Blessed are the *peace-makers*; for they shall be called the children of God."‡

When the excellency of Solomon's kingdom is described, and the happiness of his reign pointed out, *peace* is mentioned as one of the peculiar blessings of it. "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of *peace*, so long as the moon endureth."|| And the kingdom of Solomon is generally, and I think justly, apprehended to be typical of our Saviour's, under the gospel; and consequently, this passage is prophetic of the peaceableness of our blessed Redeemer's gospel kingdom, who,

* Psal. xxxiv. 14. Compare 1 Pet. iii. 11.

§ Heb. xii. 14.

† Rom. xii. 18.

‡ Mat. v. 9.

|| Psal. lxxii. 7.

who, both as our sovereign, and pattern, is the *prince of peace*. This gives strength to the argument, and farther proves that peace is a most valuable blessing, and the pursuit of it a very important duty.

The great God, whom we profess to serve, who condescends to own us as his children, in whom we trust, and with whom we hope to be eternally happy, is "the God of peace," and "the author of peace." "The God of peace be with you all."* "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."§ "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."† "The God of peace shall be with you."‡ "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly."|| "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, &c."** Now nothing but what is amiable and important can possibly enter into the name of God.—Peace, therefore, is certainly both very important and amiable, and necessary to be pursued with the utmost degree of assiduity and resolution. The blessed God cannot be the *author* of any thing that is not in its own nature, and all its consequences, good and excellent. If he then be the *author of peace*, let us manifest our
relation

* Rom. xv. 33. § Rom. xvi. 20. † 1 Cor. xiv. 33.
‡ Phil. iv. 9. || 1 Thes. v. 23. ** Heb. xiii. 20.

relation to this glorious being ; let us give proof to the world that we are possessed of his spirit, and transformed after his image, by exerting all our powers in promoting it.

The heaven to which all real christians are hastening, is a world of perfect peace and harmony. They who are admitted into those blissful regions “ enter into peace.”* But how shall we be prepared for such a world ? how can we relish such felicity, unless we be here disposed, with a holy ardor of soul, to “ follow peace with all men ?”

We are exhorted to “ pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” § and to pray for “ kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and *peaceable* life.” † Can we read these directions ? Can we reduce them to practice ? Will not our consciences condemn us in meditating upon them, or conversing about them, unless we are *lovers of peace* ?

Would we be able to reflect on any part of our conduct with pleasure and satisfaction of mind ; and experience the joy that arises from beholding its agreeable and advantageous consequences ? let us love, and endeavour to promote *peace*, as far as may be consistent with duty, among all mankind

* Isai. lvii. 2. § Psal. cxxii. 6. † 1 Tim. ii. 2.

mankind; for “to the counsellors of peace is joy.”*

Can we on the other hand, take a pleasure in exerting ourselves to prevent that which frequently terminates in the *misery*, and sometimes in the *ruin* of families, of churches, and nations? Let us endeavour to pursue and promote *peace*; for where “envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work.”§

Peace is a blessing from God, and connected in his gracious and providential dispensations, with acting in a manner that is pleasing to him; for “when a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”†

The cultivation of peace in churches, is a duty enjoined on them, and on every individual member of them, in order to enjoy the divine presence in those churches; and this unspeakable blessing is connected with the steady, persevering observance of this duty. “Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”‡

Peace is one of the happy ends of our calling, and one of the kind designs of our gracious God, in bringing us to himself, and which we perversely counteract, unless we exert ourselves in the cultivation

* Prov. xii. 20. § Jam. iii. 16. † Prov. xvi. 7.

‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

of it. For "God hath called us to peace."*

Peace is the effect of true wisdom. A *peaceable* disposition is one of its properties. For, "the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy. "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."§

From this very simple view of the matter, it is no wonder that, a peaceable disposition is so frequently, and so earnestly recommended by our Saviour himself, and by his apostles, to all who profess christianity. "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."† "Be at peace among yourselves, &c."‡ So evident, and so important are the reasons why we all ought to be *lovers of peace*.—But it may, perhaps, be enquired by the weak christian, "How far ought this spirit and practice to extend? With whom is this peace to be cultivated? And where are the limits and boundaries of it?"

Ans. We should cultivate it with all mankind. The rule is, "follow peace with *all men*." "If it be possible, as much as lieth

* 1 Cor. vii. 15. § Jam. iii. 17, 18. † Mar. ix. 50.
‡ 1 Thes. v. 13.

lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."* With all carnal men; and with all professors of religion, of every name and party, so far as your special incumbent duties will admit. But, especially, it is of very solemn consequence, and therefore emphatically recommended to every distinct church, to "be at peace among themselves."

II. Let us consider the connection that *peace* has with the *truth*, and the subordination of the former to the latter. For which purpose, let the following propositions be attended to.

1. The truth of scripture is itself entirely harmless and inoffensive. It cannot possibly injure any. It cannot fail of being useful to all who cordially receive it. It proceeds from the blessed God, pure and unmixed, as rays of light beam forth from the sun. It is given to poor benighted mankind to answer the most benign and salutary purposes. It ought, therefore, to be displeasing to no son or daughter of Adam. But, on the contrary, every one ought to search after it; and every serious, earnest enquirer after it ought to be commended and much esteemed. All this is manifest from what has been said before.

2. *The*

* Rom. xii. 18. Heb. xii. 14.

2. *The truth* is therefore, a most excellent and invaluable jewel, of infinite advantage to the souls of men. By this the dead sinner is brought to life. By this we are begotten of God, edified in faith, love and holiness, and led on to glory, while errors poison the soul, and destroy mankind. It was by error and lies that our first parents were drawn into rebellion against their Maker. And by the very same method, Satan has kept his throne, pursued his destructive purposes, and propagated rebellion against God in all ages, ever since the first transgression. The *truth* is the only efficacious and sovereign antidote, to expel this poison, and prevent the dreadful effects of it. And therefore all who firmly and practically adhere to the *truth*, ought to be esteemed as the excellent of the earth.

3. Yet the properties of the *truth* are such as render it quite disagreeable to fallen man. It mortifies human pride. The nature and tendencies of it are all holy. It necessarily opposes sin, in every form and branch of it. It glorifies the blessed God, and places him where he ought to be; at the head of the whole creation, as the sovereign of the universe, and "the only wise God." It displays his perfections and works, his glory and his grace,
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in their own native beauty. But "the carnal mind is enmity against God,"* and in consequence of that, it is enmity against the *truth*, which comes from him, and pleads his cause against error, sin and Satan. From this carnality of mind, pride, selfishness and party-interest arise, as so many abominable branches from a cursed and poisonous root; which lead us to shut our eyes against the beams of sacred truth, and maintain an opposition to it, whereinsoever it happens to be contrary to the mode, the connections, the prepossessions, the passions, or prejudices of men. As certainly, therefore, as the truth is advanced and adhered to, in all such instances, it will be resented by those who, alas! are "enemies against God in their minds, by wicked works."§ Hence it comes to pass, that the free and vigorous pursuit of truth is frequently incompatible with the enjoyment of peace. And hence it becomes so exceedingly difficult to be faithful in adhering to every branch of truth, and every path of duty, and at the same time to "live peaceably with all men."† Dreadful as the consideration is, the general tenor of scripture, christian experience, and common observation convince the truth of this.

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* Rom. viii. 7. § Col. i. 21. † Rom. xii. 18.

4. In some cases, therefore, one of the two must be given up; *truth*, or *peace*; as they cannot be both preserved, in some instances, at the same time. And here, I think the mention of a vulgar and well-known maxim will be excused. "Of two evils chuse the least; and of two advantages chuse the best." Both scripture and reason encourage us to make this choice. And in the case before us, truth has most certainly the pre-eminence. Whatever the excellencies of peace be, it is not "able to make us wise unto salvation."— It is not "able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified;" any more than to accomplish the other blessed purposes recounted above, the accomplishment of which the scripture ascribes to *the truth*. *The truth* is, therefore, infinitely more valuable than *peace*; and should ever be so esteemed, both as it respects ourselves and others. So far as that is lost or disregarded, our souls are materially injured, Christ is dishonoured; and the souls of our poor fellow-creatures cannot be expected to be converted by any other means. Whereas, so far as the truth is maintained, cordially embraced, and practically regarded, we are happy, and others are happy round about us, even though we should have
peace

peace with no one upon earth ; though all men should hate us, “ despitefully use us, and persecute us.”* *Peace*, therefore, must give way to *truth*, whenever they stand in competition, and cannot be both enjoyed together. Should we offend all men living ; should we hazard our very *lives*, in adhering to the truth, this would be no excuse for deviating from any single branch of *truth*. “ Be not afraid,” says our blessed Saviour, “ of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him.”§ On this principle, as every attentive reader will evidently observe, all the prophets acted, and all the apostles ; as well as our blessed Saviour himself, who, in this and every other imitable excellency, “ hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.” And whoever chuses to call us to account for our conduct, though the greatest monarch upon earth, “ we ought to obey God rather than men,”† is a complete answer to every accusation, and a sufficient plea for every part of our behaviour, while we regard the directions of our great Master in heaven, and venture to

* Mat. v. 44. § Luke xii. 4, 5. † Acts v. 29.

to neglect the injunctions or examples of all below the skies, so far as they deviate from his directions.

I scarcely know how to conclude this part of the subject better than in the words of the learned and candid Dr. Bates.—“When there is an evident opposition between the laws of men and of God, we must disobey our superiors though we displease them, and obey our Supreme Ruler. He that does what is forbidden, or neglects to do what is commanded by the divine law, to please men, though invested with the highest sovereignty on earth; is guilty of double wickedness; of impiety in debasing God, and idolatry in deifying men.”*

5. The consequence, therefore, is that we ought to “love peace,” as a precious blessing in this state of perplexity and sorrow; and to use every christian method to maintain and preserve it with all men, so far as may be consistent with the pursuit of *truth*, and a steady practical adherence to *that*. But by no means, proceed one step farther to obtain the good will, or good word of all men upon earth. “Buy *the truth*” at any price, whatever it cost you, it can never be purchased too dear; but “sell it not,” on any account; let nothing

* Morning Exercises, vol. 4. p. 250.

nothing be esteemed of equal value ; let nothing prevail with you to exchange it, though a nation should unite in treating you with contempt for your attachment to it.

III. I proceed to mention some of those methods by which all christians ought to manifest their love and esteem for *peace* ; or, to give you a few advices respecting this important part of christian duty. I earnestly advise you

1. To pray that peace may be cultivated among all mankind ; especially among the people of God. It is a blessing worth praying for. - I take it for granted, as an incontestible truth, that every true believer keeps up a correspondence with the blessed God in prayer. And let me exhort you, in this solemn exercise, to remember all around you. Pray " for kings, and all that are in authority." Make " supplication for all saints," forget not the ministers of Christ, of any denomination. While we seriously *pray* for all, we shall certainly feel a strong propensity to be at *peace* with all. Can I bow my knees in behalf of another, and then rise up, and begin to treat him unkindly ? Would all professors of religion, therefore, be more earnestly employed in each other's behalf at the throne of grace, it would certainly promote

promote a spirit of peace and concord amongst them. But especially, "pray for the *peace* of Jerusalem,"* and that "*peace* may be on all the Israel of God."§ For then undoubtedly, when you are humbly seeking this blessing from "the God of peace," you will be labouring to promote the peace of mankind by your tempers and lives.

2. Endeavour, by your *counsels* and *advice*s, to promote peace. "To the counsellors of peace is joy."† Consider well, and consult diligently how every thing may be done among yourselves, as a church in the most peaceful and harmonious manner, consistent with doing the will of your Lord and Saviour. Consult how you may be as inoffensive as possible towards all with whom you are concerned; that so far as is consistent with the honor of your great Master, you may "give no offence in any thing, to the Jew, the Gentile, or the church of God."‡ A prudent inoffensive conduct in the management of church affairs, has a happy tendency to promote the peace of the church; and such a conduct among mankind in general, will contribute to promote peace among them too. But this leads me to advise you. 3. In

* Psal. cxxii. 6. § Gal. vi. 16. † Prov. xii. 20.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 32.

3. In every part of your behaviour "follow the things that make for peace."* Be attentive to this rule in your respective families, in all your connections, and in all your concerns among men, but especially in the church, and in all the affairs of our blessed Redeemer's kingdom and interest. Labor, at all times, to suppress passion, pride and prejudice. Let a selfish temper and disposition have no place among you. Be always subject one to another in the fear of God, and be all clothed with humility."§ Beware at all times, of backbiting, whispering, and evil surmising. Never allow yourselves to talk of the faults of others without good proof; and only when there is an evident call for it. Nor ever allow yourselves to think of the defects of others, or to blame them in your minds, without evidence. This is *evil surmising*; and mentioned by the apostle with "pride, envy, strife, and railings,"† which are all contrary to *peace*, and consequently, injurious to the interest and church of Christ. Let the direct contrary of all these evil-dispositions be earnestly pursued and promoted among you. Let every one endeavour to cultivate the spirit of love and humility in himself, and to advance and promote it in others, especially in every

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* Rom. xiv. 19. § 1 Pet. v. 5. † 1 Tim. vi. 4.

member of the church. Always remember that besides the advantages which *naturally* flow from it, "a meek and quiet spirit is, in the sight of God, of great price."*

4. Labor and pray for advancement in spirituality of disposition and purity of heart. You will always find, brethren, that a *peaceful* spirit is inseparably connected with a *pure* one. "The wisdom that is from above is first *pure*, then *peaceable*."† Christ, the "prince of peace," is the great pattern of *purity*. Place him continually before your eyes, and strive and pray to be more perfect in the imitation of him. — "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace."‡ And therefore in proportion to that degree in which you partake of the spirit of Christ, your temper and disposition will be gentle and peaceful. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and *peace*, and joy in the holy ghost."‡ In proportion as this kingdom prospers in you, and among you, in such proportion, a peaceful and gentle temper will advance in you and among you too. In every view, therefore, purity and peacefulness of disposition, as well as peace of conscience, are inseparably connected. Let

purity,

* 1 Pet. iii. 4.

† Jam. iii. 17.

‡ Gal. v. 22.

‡ Rom. xiv. 17.

purity, then, be the object of your pursuit; and thus will you be more abundantly delivered from every thing opposite to a meek, quiet, and peaceful temper of mind. If every member of the church can be persuaded to observe this, animosities and contentions will in a great measure be excluded from among you. For should you be differently minded in other things, as you very possibly may, you will, however, by no means fail to unite in an "endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

It must be acknowledged, and I am ready to grant here, that there is a certain thoughtless indolence of temper among some professors of religion, which, in outward appearance, so much resembles the peaceful temper I now recommend, that an inconsiderate observer may sometimes be in danger of putting the one for the other. But I hope you will all be aware of this deception. For the indolent temper I speak of, is so far from being the effect of *purity*, that it is the very reverse of it.

5. Take care to "speak evil of no man."* But especially, "speak not evil *one of another*, brethren."§ This is a vile practice, that has frequently been the occasion of many contentions, and of much

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* Tit. iii. 2. § Jam. iv. 11,

unhappiness, both in the church and in the world. And what practice can be more evidently a resemblance of the works of sa an, who is therefore called "the accuser of the brethren?" Admitting that others are really to blame; what have you to do to expose their faults, without some manifest call of providence, some apparent necessity for doing it? Admitting that you were in the condition of those you asperse and reproach; would you be willing that another should expose you, and lay open your defects to the world? If not, the conclusion is clear. You are transgressing our Saviour's excellent rule, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."* This rule is founded in the nature and reason of things; and taught by the law and the prophets; as well as by Jesus Christ and his apostles. In breaking it, therefore, we are utterly inexcusable, both as men and as christians. And perhaps it is not more frequently broken by any practice than that of reviling and reproaching others.

Nor are the *mischievous effects* of this practice less manifest than the *wickedness* of it. You hereby encourage others to reproach and revile, by your example. You kindle resentment in those you speak

to.

* See Mat. vii. 12. Luke.

to. They propagate the same abomination among their confederates, and their offspring learn to imitate them in it. Thus the contagion spreads far and wide, from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and descends from generation to generation. When those you speak of hear of your conduct, as they frequently will, it begets resentment, ill-nature, and prejudice, in their minds, as it very justly may, or at least *naturally* if not *justly*. The idle tale-bearers "separate very friends," the peace of society is broken, and the world is, without any necessity, or any advantage, filled with commotion and discord. Would you, therefore, shew your love and esteem for peace, from this, and from many other motives, take care that you "speak evil of no man."

6. If you would shew yourselves christians, by your love and esteem for *peace*, take care that you injure no one living, in his reputation, his property, his spirit, or otherwise, however any other may treat you. "Be not overcome of evil;" but imitate your amiable pattern, in using every possible endeavour to "overcome evil with good."* However others may offend or injure you, see that you "repense to *no man* evil for evil."§ But, on

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* Rom. xii. 21.

§ Rom. xii. 17.

the contrary, "ever follow that which is good," kind, gentle, and beneficial,* "both among yourselves, and to all men." By this conduct, you cultivate a peaceable temper in yourselves, and habituate yourselves to a peaceable conduct; and set an example of it before others. You hereby take an effectual method to disappoint any malicious persons who wish to gratify their resentments against you, and to melt down their resentful minds to amity and goodwill. This is perhaps, the *most natural*, if not the *only* sense we can fairly put on the apostle's advice; "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."§ Whereas, if you take a contrary method, if you resent injuries, and either in speech or conduct, "render evil for evil;" if you contend with the contentious, and indulge yourselves in any kind or degree of resentment, you will endanger both your character and peace of mind; you will "grieve the holy spirit of God," and probably wound his cause too; and you will frequently, if not always find, that "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water;" and therefore, it will be your wisdom and happiness, and preserve and promote both your

* το αγαθον. 1 Thes. v. 15.

§ Rom. xii. 20.

your own peace, and the peace of others, if you “leave off contention before it be meddled with.”*

7. As nearly connected with the foregoing direction, I advise you to shew your love to *peace* and concord, by taking care to embrace and improve every opportunity of doing all the good you can, both to the bodies and souls of men; but especially to all who are “of the household of faith.”§ Remember it was the character of our blessed Saviour, our only perfect pattern, that he “went about doing good.” Let this be your practice, so far as may be consistent with your situation and opportunities. You cannot be losers by it, brethren, at that great day when the Lord shall “reward every man according to his works,”† when he who has, in this world “sowed sparingly, shall reap also sparingly,” and he who has “sowed bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.”‡ And this practice abundantly promotes a spirit of peace and love among mankind; and often forces esteem from the enemies of real christianity, towards the real followers of Christ. Whereas, if professors of religion discover a spirit of selfishness, negligence and sloth; those who are unconverted, and enemies

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* Prov. xvii. 14. § Gal. vi. 10. † Mat. xvi. 27.

‡ 2 Cor. ix. 6.


to godliness, do very naturally, and I think, I may add, very justly too, conceive a detestation and abhorrence of such professors. And through the ignorance and perverseness of their corrupt minds, they frequently, though very unjustly, go so far as, on this account, to detest even religion itself. This, therefore, besides its other abominable tendencies, is by no means the way to "follow peace with all men."

Let this advice also be applied to "brotherly love," or that love which ought ever to subsist and be manifested among those who belong to the "household of faith." Where such love is not properly discovered on one hand, suspicions and jealousies are frequently excited on the other; and these naturally, and very generally terminate in feuds, animosities and discord, which are utterly opposite to *peace*, and destructive of it. But when christians make it appear that they "love one another with pure hearts fervently,"* this contributes exceedingly to spread the spirit of cordiality and peace among the members of the same church, and professors of the same neighbourhood. By a readiness, therefore, to do good, on every occasion, "follow peace with all men," and prove that you "love peace."

* 1 Pet. i. 22.

8. Shew your *love of peace*, by freely allowing to all others the same liberty in religious matters, which you claim for yourselves. Liberty to worship God in that way which we apprehend to be scriptural, is every man's birthright; and every attempt to deprive any one of it, by whomsoever the attempt is made, is a species of tyranny. It is therefore both lawful and necessary to resist every such attempt, whoever makes it. And if it be right for all to have this liberty, it is right they should *enjoy* it with the utmost freedom. No one ought to deprive others of it, or to treat them with the least degree of disrespect, because they differ from himself. To treat them in this manner, is, in effect, to resent their obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has directed them to "call no man master upon earth."* And yet this meanness of spirit, this contempt of those who differ from us, inconsistent and unchristian as it is, has too often been found among those who profess the religion of Christ; and the peace of mankind has hereby been shamefully disturbed and broken. How often have husband and wives, parents and children, foolishly and wickedly despised one another, treated each other with unbecoming temper and lan-

* Mat. xxiii. 8.



language, and thrown families, and sometimes churches and neighbourhoods into uproar and confusion, by their party broils and contentions, because they have imbibed different notions, worshipped in different forms, or thought it necessary to attend on the ministry of different men !

I grant it is advantageous in several respects, when families are agreed in these matters ; and I readily admit that so long as *children* or *servants* are incapable of judging for themselves, they ought to be under the government and direction of their parents or masters ; who are charged to “train them up in the way they should go.” I grant yet farther, that if either parents, or children who are come to maturity of age and judgment, or husbands or wives, or any other, either head or member of a family ; or any friend, relative, or neighbour, or any other person, do apprehend his relation, friend or neighbour, to be drawn into any error, whether in principle or practice, it is the duty of the person who apprehends this, to take every proper method he is capable of, to set the erroneous person right. And it is a matter of very great importance that he be laborious and successful in it ; especially if the error be flagrant and influential upon the temper and practice ; for we have
seen

seen in the foregoing pages that *truth* is of very great and tremendous consequence. But then the very face of the new testament most evidently teacheth—that this should be done with lenity and meekness; always “speaking the truth in love.”* That no external compulsion ought to be made use of; for this can neither be vindicated by scripture, nor by reason; nor is calculated to work conviction in the mind of any rational being. Therefore, if neither party can be convinced of error, it is their duty, on each side, to act according to the light they have, and mutually to allow each other all the advantages of civil society; and to walk together in harmony, peace, and friendship, even though they judge and act differently in matters of religion. Otherwise, how can they possibly renounce every master, but the Lord Jesus Christ? which is the indispensable duty of every christian. So that all unkind treatment on account of the differences mentioned above, is entirely unjustifiable, and inconsistent with that peaceable spirit which our blessed Redeemer so much approves and recommends.

9. If any of you be reproached and persecuted by others, for righteousness sake,
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* Ephes. iv. 15,

and a faithful regard to any branch of truth or duty, bear it with patience and meekness, as the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you."* "For this is thankful, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure griefs, suffering wrongfully."§ Besides, resentment, in all such cases, is generally only like throwing oil into the fire, by which the flame will rage the more; and is therefore never likely to promote peace. But patience and meekness will even blunt the edge of persecution. They will most effectually soften the very bowels of the persecutors themselves; and are most likely of any methods to procure the peace and esteem even of the brutes and savages of mankind. For persecution for conscience sake, can proceed from nothing else but brutish tyranny.

Learn, therefore, brethren, of your blessed Master, to go on steadily in the way of duty, "committing yourselves to him that judgeth righteously,"† humbly and earnestly praying for all your persecutors and slanderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."‡

* Mat. v. 44.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 19.

† 1 Pet. ii. 23.

‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

10. Be much employed in prayer with and for each other. Prayer has been often called, and that justly, "the very breath of a true christian." And it has a heart-uniting effect upon those employed in it as a social exercise. If you be thus engaged frequently one with another, you will not suddenly admit little piques and jealousies to take place, which frequently terminate in alienation of spirit, if not in those contentions which disturb and destroy the peace of the church. And if, when absent and retired, you be frequently offering up "supplications for all saints,"* it will certainly be the less easy to indulge a peevish and untowardly disposition against those for whom you have been pleading with your heavenly Father on your knees at the throne of grace. This practice will greatly tend to the promotion of that love which "hopes, bears, and endures all things;" which "suffereth long, and is kind;" which "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil."§ And when this love reigns in the heart, it will be very easy and natural to "live in peace," and we shall find very little inclination to animosities and warm contentions.

11. Labor.

* Ephes. vi. 18. § 1 Cor. xiii. 5-7.

11. Labor to *oblige* all with whom you have any concern, as much as possible, and to “please all men to edification.”* By this conduct you are not in danger of “giving offence in any thing, to the Jew, the Gentile, or the church of God.”§ If there be a reigning desire and constant endeavour to please and oblige all as much as possible, this will prevent and cut off many occasions of evil surmisings and jealousies; which are always destructive to peace and harmony. By these methods, therefore, and by every other, which is laudable and scriptural, give demonstration of your love for *peace*, and pursue things that make for it.

To conclude: I beseech you all to remember that “peace with God,” is the first great blessing, about which you have all the greatest need to be earnestly and instantly concerned. If you are conscious that you don’t enjoy this unspeakable benefit, rest not in your dreadful condition any longer, lest the wrath of the Almighty overtake you, and “there be none to deliver you!” What a dismal situation! Transgressors of God’s righteous law, and yet no evidence that “your sins are blotted out!” Continually under his eye, and yet his “wrath abideth on you!” What will you.

* Rom. xv. 2. § 1 Cor. x. 32.

you do, when the Lord Jehovah ariseth in his fury against all who "neglect his great salvation?" Do you ask how this great blessing is to be obtained? Hear a divine infallible instructor. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."*

Remember that when you are partakers of "peace with God," it is your indispensable duty, and your great privilege, to "search the scriptures" respecting every other branch of divine truth, and thus to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."§ Hold it fast, abide by it, and labor to be daily more and more acquainted with it, and established in it. Out of regard to your blessed Redeemer, and for the sake of your own soul, and many others, "buy the truth, and sell it not." It is the truth of God, and that *alone*, which can direct you safely, and comfort and support you, in life and death; and by which you must be judged at the last day.†

While you are thus zealous for the truth, use your utmost endeavour, "if it be possible,

* Acts xiii. 38, 39. § 1 Thes. v. 21. † John xii. 47, 48.

sible, to live peaceable with all men,"* of all ranks, characters, and persuasions. But if this should lie beyond your power, be, in a particular manner assiduous, and all unite in labouring to "be at peace among yourselves."§

HOLINESS, STEDFASTNESS, UNANIMITY, and ZEAL,

Recommended to Professors of Christianity, particularly to the Church in WADSWORTH, whom I have lately served in the GOSPEL.

PHIL. i. 27. *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may bear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

I AM now beginning to address you, my dearly beloved brethren, on the most painful occasion, and with the most disagreeable sensations I ever have known, since I have been employed in the solemn and important work of the ministry. And there

* Rom. xii. 18. § Thes. v. 13.

there is no advice more expressive of my ardent wishes respecting you, nor, as I apprehend, better calculated to promote your welfare, than that which is contained in the text I have just now read in your hearing.* I therefore earnestly intreat your attentive regard to it; and may the God of wisdom and love enable me to illustrate and enforce it in such a manner as may, through his blessing, prove subservient to your present and future advantage!

The great apostle PAUL, and his fellow-labourers, had planted christianity at Philippi, according to the common chronology, about eleven years before he wrote this epistle to the church there. § And after this, he had gone through many other parts, both of Europe and Asia, “testifying the gospel of the grace of God;” † and, “the Lord working with him,” ‡ he “opened the eyes” of many, and “turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ.” || But he
is

* The text mentioned was made the foundation of two discourses, the last day of my stated labors in WADSWORTH. § See Acts xvi. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Mar. xvi. 20. || Acts xxvi. 18.

is now apprehended, conveyed to Rome, and there kept a prisoner, at large; in which situation he hires a house for himself to dwell in, and with true christian fortitude, improves his opportunity to "preach the kingdom of God, and to teach those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him."*

From Rome, he writes this most affectionate epistle, to instruct and establish the brethren at PHILIPPI in the great doctrines and duties of christianity; the practical part of which epistle seems to be epitomized in the words of our text. "*Only* let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, &c." Upon which advice, let us

I. Endeavour to illustrate the import and extent of the word *conversation*, and shew what is implied in its being "as becometh the gospel of Christ."

II. A little more fully consider what is contained in the advice of the apostle, when he so earnestly exhorts them to let their conversation be such.

III. Illustrate the argument which the apostle uses to enforce his advice; or, the reason he assigns for his ardent wishes; "that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, &c."

I. Let

* Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

I. Let us endeavour to illustrate the import and extent of the word *conversation*, and shew what is implied in its being “as becometh the gospel of Christ.”

Were we to attend to the original words in a critical manner, we should find that the spirit of the text is to this purpose. “You are called by the gospel of Christ to be citizens of heaven the new Jerusalem; see that you cultivate the temper, and act the part of those who are exalted to such glory and dignity. Remember the genius, nature, and tendency of that gospel which calls you to this dignity; and see that your temper and conduct be ornamental to this gospel.”* But the painful feelings of my mind on the present occasion repress all inclinations to the niceties of criticism; and therefore I beg leave to wave every thing of that kind, and to consider the easy and obvious meaning of the words which our English version suggests.

“Let your whole life and conduct be such as *becometh*, that is, answereth, or is agreeable to, § and worthy of, the gospel, which

* πολιτευεσθε, Est translatio ducta a civibus qui secundum civitatis suæ leges vivunt. Vid Grotium, in locum. See also the critics in Pool’s Synopsis, Guyse, and other modern commentators on the text.

§ αἵτως. See Rom. xvi. 2. Col. i. 10.
1 Thes. ii. 12. Gr.

which both requires and produces holiness and spirituality of temper and behaviour in all who know the grace and power of it."

Conversation, or behaviour extends to all the scenes, relations, and proceedings of mortals. Divide yourselves into classes; consider your various relations; think of the departments you *now* fill in life, or that you *may* fill hereafter. Let your whole behaviour be such as the gospel warrants, requires, produces; such as will adorn it, and prove you possessed of *the truth*, enriched by the blessings, and impressed by the power of it, in all these different circumstances.

Are you possessed of a greater portion of riches than others? Employ and improve the possessions with which the Lord has intrusted you, and for every mite of which you must shortly give an account; employ these, not to gratify your carnal appetites; not so as will make you shine among the silly herds of gaudy triflers; not like the poor grovelling creatures who are anxious to increase their shining dust, by "adding house to house, and field to field;" not so as to be "conformed to this world," and to imitate the rich and great who live around you;" but so "as becometh the gospel of Christ;" as will adorn that, and recommend the profession of it.

Are you poor? don't be employed in useless pursuits. Don't trifle away your precious time. Don't defraud others, or use any mean and dishonest arts to raise yourselves amongst men. But let your whole life and behaviour shew that you possess the spirit of the gospel, and enjoy the life of it; that you feel the power of its motives and supports; and are animated by the promises of it, and the prospects it presents to you. Let your patience, contentment, and chearfulness, your humility and diligence, give evidence to all who observe you, that you have a treasure in heaven, that your ambition is to act like those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and are candidates for a blessed immortality.

Are you advanced in age? Have you made a profession of religion a considerable time? Bring forth fruit for God in your old age. Far from growing old in sin,—far from indulging your affections to centre in the things of time,—far from allowing moroseness and bitterness of spirit to prevail in you,—far from being ignorant of any branch of duty,—much less having a necessity of being taught again “the first principles of the oracles of God, walk as *men*.” “In understanding be ye *men*.” And make it appear that you are such.

Act

Act the part of "fathers and mothers in Israel." Be exemplary and ready "to teach young persons." Take care you be steady in your tempers, even and regular in your walk and deportment, resolute for God and holiness; and in a word, so sanctified, devout and heavenly in every part of your spirit and behaviour, "as becometh the gospel of Christ," and suitable to the character of those who expect soon to take their places in the regions of light and felicity above the skies.

Are you young? Exert your abilities, and employ your vivacity in the service of your Lord, Saviour, and King, as those who are acting with an everlasting heaven, and an unfading crown in view. Don't trifle away your best time, and the prime of your days in things that cannot be of much advantage; but lay them out for God, and with a view to eternity. Your bones are full of marrow, and your veins full of blood; your passions are strong, and your spirits lively and vigorous. Labor to be well instructed, and to exercise self-government. Remember, "he that hath no power over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls."* By yielding to your passions in younger life, you may habituate yourself to

* Prov. xxv. 28.

to irregularity and imprudence ; bring guilt upon your mind, and injure your character, and both deprive yourself of influence in future life, and expose yourself to many snares and temptations. Be always " swift to hear, and slow to speak," for this peculiarly becomes young persons. Self-denial, in these things, is absolutely necessary, and cannot be too soon begun, or too resolutely practised, lest you should never learn that stability of mind and conduct, which would be an ornament to your profession, and peculiarly " becometh the gospel of Christ."

It would be very easy to proceed to all the ranks and characters of mankind, and thus to apply and address the exhortation to each. But that would extend beyond my present limits and design. Let what hath been said suffice for a specimen ; and let all apply the advice of the text to themselves in a similar manner. Are you husbands ? wives ? parents ? children ? masters ? servants ? magistrates ? subjects ? persons in any branch of trade ? In these, and every other capacity, think with yourselves, as in the sight of God, what kind of behaviour, in your different relations, " becometh the gospel of Christ." Examine yourselves and your conduct, with a holy solemnity ; earnestly pray for divine
assist-

assistance, and by that assistance, keep the "gospel of Christ," and a suitable conversation continually in view. In every part of your behaviour in your families, in every commercial concernment, in buying, selling, borrowing, paying, in all contracts, and in the fulfilment of them, let the great object of your attention be to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." In the fellowship of the church, in a diligent regard to the order and discipline of it;—in giving and taking reproof, exhortation and admonition, and every other instance of brotherly love;—in filling up your places at all ordinances, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together,"—in "walking wisely toward them that are without," and in every other part of conduct, both in civil and religious matters, examine seriously what conversation is "becoming the gospel of Christ," and take care that through divine assistance, *that* be your conversation.

Consider here, brethren, what the apostle would have us keep our eye upon, as the standard and test of a conversation that is truly christian, and such as it ought to be. Elsewhere the saints are commanded to "keep the word of God," to keep the words of Christ, to do "whatever he commands, &c." But here, to behave as "becometh the gospel of Christ." The

The gospel, as you have often heard, signifies *good-tidings*. This is its native import; nor do I know a single place of scripture where it has any other meaning. It signifies that part of the word of God, which lays open the wonderful love of God, to poor sinful, perishing men, and points out the way to enjoy free, full, and everlasting salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ; requires poor sinners to believe in him, and assures them of eternal life in consequence of it, through what the blessed Jesus has done for them, at the same time, threatening everlasting misery to those who obey not this gospel, but neglect this great salvation. Hence the gospel is also called "the law of faith."* And we read of *obeying* the gospel,†§ and of their unhappy state who obey it not.† It appears to be called "the Gospel of Christ," as he is the author of it. He commissioned those who preached it.‡ He is the chief subject of it. Hence what is called, in some places, *preaching Christ*, is in others, called *preaching the gospel*. And all the blessings contained and exhibited in it, flow from Christ, and could never have been enjoyed, so far as we are capable

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* Rom. iii. 27. § Rom. xvi. 16. † 1 Pet. iv. 17.

† Mar. xvi. 15. Compare Acts viii. 5. xiv. 7.

Rom. i. 15. 1 Cor. i. 23. and other places.

ble of conceiving, any other way than by him.

Now though believers ought to be instructed in every branch of duty, and though the apostles themselves instructed those who had already believed, in every part of holiness, yet it does not appear that the gospel, strictly speaking, lays down any rules for our conversation. This is properly the business of the law, in the hands of Christ, who is the "head of the church,"* and the "head of all things to the church;"§ to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth.† Believers therefore, though "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, through faith in his blood,"‡ yet are "not without law to God, but are under the law to Christ."|| So that they are under stronger obligations to glorify God by a holy conversation, than we could ever have been laid under, if the grace and salvation of Jesus Christ had not been exhibited to us in the gospel.

Besides, the gospel begets the sinner unto God and holiness. It transforms the soul, and inspires it with holy desires to please God, and to glorify him. It "is the

* 1 Cor. xi. 3. Col. i. 18. § Ephes. i. 22.

† Mat. xxviii. 18. ‡ Rom. iii. 24, 25.

|| 1 Cor. ix. 21.

the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."* "I have begotten you to Christ," the apostle says, "by the gospel." So that when the power of the gospel is experimentally known, the sinner becomes a new creature. "Old things are passed away, and behold all things become new."† The operation, the tendency, the motives, the prospects of the gospel are all holy. And, therefore, a conversation suitable to these, is a "conversation becoming the gospel of Christ."

It will, therefore, be necessary to illustrate the contents, quality and tendency of the gospel, in order to have a fuller understanding of that conversation which is correspondent to it. But this will lead us to the

II. Head of discourse; in which we have engaged to consider a little more fully what is contained in the apostle's advice, when he earnestly exhorts the Philippians to such a conversation as "becometh the gospel of Christ."

In order to conceive clearly on this momentous subject, we shall find it advantageous to view the gospel in several different points of light, and to consider the influence that each of these views will have, or ought to have, on our temper and conduct.

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1. It

* Rom. i. 16. † 2 Cor. v. 17.

1. It is a declaration of love and mercy from the blessed God to fallen man. We have all ruined ourselves by rebellion against our great and glorious Creator.— “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”* is an awful humbling truth, however slightly regarded, which is confirmed by the general tenor of scripture, and the voice of every conscience. “The wages of sin is death,”† is the affirmation of one who could not be mistaken. To death, then, we are all exposed, and must be everlastingly consigned, unless the God against whom we have sinned, and whose righteous law we have transgressed, should, in tender compassion, contrive a way for our escape. But glory, everlasting glory be ascribed to his adorable name! he has contrived a way to escape for us! Astonishing grace! “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”† “God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.”† And “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”‖ Is not the warmest gratitude due for such unparalleled, such infinite love? Let this gratitude, then, work in our

* Rom. iii. 23. § Rom. vi. 23. † Joh. iii. 16.
 † Rom. viii. 32. ‖ 1 Tim. i. 15.

our hearts, and warm our minds. Let us not only read, but feel the consideration that “we are not our own, but are bought with a price,” a price of unutterable value; and let all our powers unite to “glorify God” in every part of our behaviour, “with our bodies and our spirits, which are Gods.”* And if this be our sincere endeavour, we shall hereby have our “conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ.”

2. The “gospel of Christ” is a sacred and divine weapon in the hand of the spirit, by which the foolish pride and prejudices of poor infatuated, obstinate sinners are subdued, and the enslaved mind is brought into the “glorious liberty of God’s dear Son.” It proclaims this liberty to us, § and where it is not finally put away from us, † it happily produces this liberty in us, so that we enjoy the experience of it in our own souls; and those who have “believed through grace,” ‡ happily know, in some measure, that “the truth hath made them free.” || They are “begotten again by the word of truth—even the word which by the gospel is preached unto them.” They have “purified their souls in obeying the truth thro’

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the

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. § Luke iv. 18, 19. † Acts xiii. 46
 ‡ Acts xviii. 27. || John viii. 32. 1 Pet. i. 23—25.

the spirit.”* The God of love has “purified their hearts by faith.”§ I hope, brethren, that many of you have some experience that this is your own case. You find this glorious liberty from the power of sin and “this present evil world.” You feel this delightful change from sin to holiness. You no longer pursue “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,” after which you were formerly “led away captive by the Devil at his will.” But, on the contrary, you “delight in the law of God, after the inward man.” You “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” You esteem the commandments of God “above gold, yea, above fine gold;” they are “sweeter to you than honey, and the honey-comb. This is effected by the operation of the gospel of Christ on your souls. This proves its holy tendency in a manner superior to all the arts of reasoning. Let it appear in your life and conversation. Be wise and watchful. “Keep yourselves unspotted from the world.”† Beware that “after you have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you be not again entangled therein and overcome, and your latter end be worse with you

* v. 22.

§ Acts xv. 9.

† Jam. i. 27.

you than the beginning.”* “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”§ Thus all men of understanding, who observe you, will confess that your conversation is, thus far, “as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”

3. “The gospel of Christ” exhibits abundant and all-sufficient grace and power to *maintain* your ground, and to *obtain* a *final* and *complete* victory over all the enemies of your souls; and it contains most animating and precious promises, to encourage you in your sacred warfare. Be attentive to these encouraging promises, look to your Almighty Saviour, for the continual supplies he has engaged to give you; and “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,”† fully assured that “as your days,” difficulties, dangers, and enemies are, “so shall your strength be.”‡ As you are now delivered from, and have taken part against, the world and the devil, be assured that they are now your determined enemies, and will maintain a constant opposition against you. But remember “this is the victory that daily and hourly overcometh the world, even our faith;”|| and if you “resist the devil, steadfast in the faith,”*** you will certainly find that

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“he

* 2 Pet. ii. 20. § 1 Thes. v. 22. † 2 Tim. ii 1.
‡ Deut. xxxiii. 25. || 1 John v. 4. *** 1 Pet. v. 9.

“he will flee from you.”* Remember him who has mercifully said, to all his feeble, afflicted, distressed followers, “my grace is sufficient for you,”§ for your support and comfort in every struggle, and in every combat. And the same kind Saviour assures you, with regard to hereafter, “to him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”† Meditate on these good words of God, realize the truth of them, plead them in prayer, and in the strength, and under the influence of them act like a *consistent christian*. Be not conformed to this world, but be daily more and more “transformed by the renewing of your minds,” and you will hereby increase in the comfortable sensible experience of “what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.‡ You shall not only read in your bibles, but “have the witness in yourselves,” that your blessed Redeemer came “that you might have joy, pleasure, and comfort, and every part of spiritual life, and that you might have them more abundantly;”|| and that, under the influence of his exceeding great and precious promises, it is both
your

* Jam. iv. 7. § 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Rev. iii. 21.

‡ Rom. xii. 2. || John x. 12.

your duty and your happiness, to “ cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.”* And this, you will be able to accomplish, through the almighty power of the holy spirit: and your heavenly father is ever ready to “ give the holy spirit to them that ask him.”§

You may, and you probably will, have tribulation, perhaps “ much tribulation” to meet with, and to struggle through; in your way to glory.† And “ all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” ‡ too; but be not discouraged; “ press towards the mark,” keep the “ Captain of your salvation” continually in view, who will not leave, nor forsake you.” Be attentive to every duty, wait on the Lord for renewed strength, in every ordinance; “ trust in the Lord at all times, and in his strength, you shall bid defiance to every foe, surmount every difficulty, and in a little time bid farewell to every danger. “ Yea, in all these things, you shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved you.” || Thus keep near to your God, maintain your ground, “ fight the good fight of faith,” and you shall “ grow stronger and stronger,” in faith, love, and every

* 2 Cor. vii. 1. § Luke xi. 13. † Acts xiv. 22.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 12. || Rom. viii. 37.

every branch of holiness; and all who are intimately acquainted with you shall confess, your holy, active, zealous, improving conversation, is such as "becometh the gospel of Christ;" that precious, glorious gospel, which contains every conceivable stimulation, which exhibits every needful supply to the true believer in Jesus Christ.

4. The gospel teacheth us the infinite value of an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, even though we are deprived of every thing else, that is esteemed great or good. If you truly believe in Jesus, my brethren, "you are all the children of God by faith,"* and if you be the children of God, you are *heirs*; "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."§ If this be your character, if this be your happy condition, "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," (all the ministers of Christ, with their various abilities and endowments) "or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."†

"What heart of stone, but glows at words like these?"

Your heavenly Father has promised that
you

* John i. 12. Gal. iii. 26. § Rom. viii. 17.

† 1. Cor. iii. 22, 23.

you "shall want no good thing."* Nay, has assured you, that "all things work together for your good;"§ and that though you may be exposed to manifold temptations, or trials, yet, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted," or tried "above that ye are able;" but will, with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."†

Now what kind of conversation is becoming such a gospel as this? A gospel that so strongly expresses the happiness and the dignity of every true christian? Surely a conversation which discovers chearfulness of spirit in every trial; patience under every cross; contentment in every situation, and resignation to your heavenly Father's will, whatever scenes of trouble you may have to pass through in this world.

Let your conversation, in this respect, be "as it becometh the gospel of Christ." Learn "in every state to be content;"‡ and let it appear that you are so. Let all men see, that you are satisfied with the portion given to you by the providential hand of your heavenly Father, whose unerring wisdom knows what is the best for you.

* Psal. xxxiv. 10. § Rom. viii. 28. † 1 Cor. x. 13.

‡ Phil. iv. 11.

you. Let it always be manifest by your temper and conduct, that you maintain an humble consciousness that your case is much better than you deserve; and let a sense of the all-sufficient, everlasting portion you have in Christ, keep you serene, chearful and happy. "Be anxious about nothing" in this life, "but in every thing," in every strait, necessity and trial, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," as your never-failing, ever-living friend, who is always ready to help you, and pities you, "as a father doth his children."* In thus referring all your concerns to him, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."§

5. The gospel sets before you the amazing *humiliation* and *condescension* of the son of God, who left the glories of heaven, underwent the miseries of earth, and at last, endured the ignominious and most painful death of the cross, in order to make us miserable and unworthy sinners everlastingly happy. He who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness

* Psal. ciii. 13. § Phil. iv. 6, 7.

likeness of men: And, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”*

“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” my brethren, “that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be made rich.”†

Surely, a gospel that represents to us such a Saviour, and such a pattern, requires a kind, lowly and condescending behaviour in you, and in me; otherwise, how is our conversation such as becometh it, or worthy of it? Such condescension as that of our Divine Redeemer, most certainly ought to teach us “not to mind high things, but to condescend to men of low estate;”† otherwise how can we pretend to call ourselves the disciples of the kind and condescending “Lord of glory?” Let your conversation, then, be always exemplary for kindness, humility, condescension and love. Be ever ready to stoop, with pleasure, to the meanest among mortals, and to the meanest offices, by which you can be really useful to others; especially, if you can any way contribute to their everlasting welfare. Make it appear that you are “partakers of the divine nature”

* Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. † 2 Cor. viii. 9. ‡ Rom. xii. 16.

nature" indeed, as well as in pretence, by a readiness not only to make the necessitous among men sharers in your *worldly* possessions, but even in your *spiritual* advantages too; or to perform, or to suffer any thing you can, consistent with your other duties, that they may arrive with you in the regions of glory, and be helped comfortably on in their way thither.

How much, especially, should professors of religion be ready to do good *one to another*? How resistless is the argument of the apostle John on this head! "Hereby," says he, "perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* If this temper be in us, and if our behaviour make it manifest, our conversation will, in this part of it, be "as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

6. The gospel presents us with a prospect of endless felicity, in the world to come, as the certain portion of all true believers, and in the plainest and strongest manner assures them of it. It frequently declares "that those who believe in Jesus shall not perish, but have eternal life."§ Our Saviour says to his disciples, "ye believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's

* 1 John, iii. 16. § Mar. xvi. 16.
John iii. 15, 16,—35. &c.

Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* This view of the gospel calls for gratitude to a good God, zeal in his service, and great purity in heart and life, from all who profess themselves candidates of that celestial world. What an infinite mercy to be made a child of God! To be made an heir of never-ending glory! To have our eyes opened, our consciences awakened, our minds humbled, our souls converted, in order to prepare us for an eternal abode in that blessed world! You know by experience, brethren, if truly converted, that "he who hath wrought you for this self-same thing is God."§ And let it appear that you daily live under a sense of it; and are ever ready to consecrate all your powers and capacities to his service, who, in rich grace, has both entitled you to, and prepared you for, such ineffable glory. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits," will surely be the language of our hearts all the days of our abode in this world. And if this be the language of our hearts, we shall, in proportion, make

* Joh. xiv. 1, 2, 3. § 2 Cor. v. 5.

make it manifest by a correspondent practice. Zeal will animate our spirits, and we shall "delight in the law of our good God, after the inner man." From hence will arise a conversation "becoming the gospel."

You also know that heaven is a place of perfect purity. Nothing impure, "nothing that defileth can ever enter" into that blessed world.* If you then profess yourselves the heirs of it, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"† A candidate for heaven; a citizen of the New Jerusalem, and yet indulging carnal lusts; and yet conformed to the fashions and corrupt customs of a vain world! What a contradiction is this! Little less than a contradiction in terms! Remember, brethren, "the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth" all who are possessed of it, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world." And whoever is not taught to live such a life as this, can never with confidence and satisfaction, "look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."‡ For,
"without

* Rev. xxi. 27.

§ 2 Pet. iii. 11.

† Tit. ii. 11, 12. 13.

“without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”*

The heaven to which you are hastening, is a portion which contains all that immortal creature can enjoy or desire; and when you awake up from the grave, in the morning of resurrection, then shall you find yourselves perfectly “satisfied.”§—This should teach you to maintain, and always to discover a holy indifference with regard to the trifles of time. It is very unbecoming a prince who is heir apparent to the crown, to be anxious about straws and pebbles. Every real saint is heir to an incorruptible inheritance, “and a never fading crown.” These are “reserved in heaven for you,”† and will infinitely more than make amends for all the toils, necessities, and troubles, you can meet with in your way to heaven. Learn then to pass through this world, with a holy scorn of its glittering toys, and gaudy pageantry, not desiring its splendors or possessions; easy with, and thankful for, what your heavenly Father gives you, and entirely content and submissive, whatever he takes from you; in the consideration that you are “made kings and priests unto God, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.”

7. “The

* Heb. xii. 14. § Psal. xvii. 15. † Jam. i. 12.
1 Pet. i. 4.

7. "The gospel of Christ," assures you that every service you perform on earth, for the honor and glory of your great Master and Saviour, shall be abundantly rewarded in the next world. Whatever you do for Christ below, will most certainly be remembered at the great day of account. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shewed towards his name."* So that, if you dare give him credit till that day, and, in the mean time "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," you will then prove, to your everlasting joy, that "your labors shall not be in vain in the Lord."§ Can you be *slothful*, brethren, with such a prospect before your eyes? Will not views, like these, rouse you to a holy activity and zeal for God? You hear of those who have waded through seas of blood, to obtain the poor fading honors of this life. These are pushing "for a corruptible crown; but you an incorruptible."† You can't make the promise of a trifling pecuniary reward to a child in your families, to be performed at the end of a day or a week's labor, but you expect it will quicken him to diligence in business: and if he be not peculiarly stupid, you

* Heb. vi. 10. § 1 Cor. xv. 58. † 1 Cor. ix. 25.

you will find that it hath this effect upon him. You see instances daily of the force and power of such persuasions as these. And surely you feel the sacred animating force of them in your own hearts. Oh, then, let your conversation make it appear. Let your zeal and unwearied assiduity in the service of God, give every spectator a convincing proof that "having such promises" as these, it is your endeavour and ambition "to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."* This conversation is such as "becometh the Gospel of Christ.

8. Once more; the gospel informs you that *all* of you who believe, and love the Lord Jesus, and *all* other true believers, shall go to the *same* heaven, and eternally enjoy the *same* blessedness. "They shall be with me. where I am," says the dear Redeemer, "that they may behold my glory."§ They shall *all* be with him.—Surely this should engage all believers to "walk in love," to "take heed that they fall not out by the way." Whoever is truly converted is a real christian, whatever mistakes he may lie under. His mistakes, whether in faith or practice, will certainly be consumed as wood, "hay,
and

* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

§ John xvii. 24.

and stubble," at the great trying day, when the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is ! and the person shall "suffer the loss" himself.* But this consideration calls for my pity towards, rather than resentment against, any other professor who is apparently built on the foundation, Christ Jesus, and yet appears, in the integrity of his heart, whether by the "sleight of men,"§ or otherwise, to be led into these mistakes. For the loss shall be all his own. And if this were not the case, yet it is manifest by constant observation, that these mistakes are, by no means, likely to be cured by wrangling, or by an ill-natured sly behaviour. And how ugly does it appear, that those who are going to the same everlasting home, to feast eternally in the same delightful mansions, should behave to each other as enemies in their way to these mansions ! What an inconsistent appearance will it have, brethren, when we stand before our heavenly Father, if it then be found that we have spent any part of our time in angry contentions ; or any part of our breath in reproaches and hard names in our journey homewards ! Will this be any decoration to our character then ? Will this do us any honor among the inhabitants of that world

* 1 Cor. iii. 11—16.

§ Ephes. iv. 14.

world of peace and love? Will this procure any reward from the "God of peace?" who has taught us to "follow peace with all men?"—In a word; is this a "conversation that becometh the gospel of Christ?" If not, suffer the word of exhortation; and how zealous soever you are, as you ought to be zealous, for every part of truth, let your temper, your tongue, and your whole life demonstrate, that you cordially wish "grace and peace to all that IN EVERY PLACE, call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs, and ours."*

To conclude; let your whole conversation be "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin, and separate from sinners; calculated to glorify your dear Saviour, who of his infinite mercy and love, hath given himself for you, and hath "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;" and in every relation, and every concern of this life, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven." This is a conversation "becoming the gospel of Christ;" while the contrary one will be a reproach to your character and profession, and will dishonor "that holy name by which you are called."

III.

III. Let me endeavour to illustrate the argument which the apostle uses, to enforce his advice; or the reason he assigns for his ardent wishes, that the conversation of his Philippian brethren may be such as that above described. "That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

The apostle was now a prisoner at Rome, and tells the Philippians in the 25th verse, that he is confident of being still preserved, notwithstanding his present confinement, and suffering. But, as he might possibly be directed, in the course of providence, to labor elsewhere, rather than at Philippi, he exhorts them to attend to this one thing, a *christian conversation*, which is the great concern of all true believers;—and then, should he be favoured with an opportunity to pay them another visit, or should he be called to another part of the world, and not permitted to see them again in the flesh, he might, however, hear of their prosperity, steadfastness and zeal, in the work of the Lord.

I, brethren, am a poor insignificant creature; and whether I see you again, or not, cannot be of much importance to

you,

you, though I doubt not, it will always be a very great pleasure to *me*. You know the precariousness of my present circumstances, and how uncertain it is, whether I must continue to labor among you as a minister or not. Life, also, is very uncertain. I may be soon called out of the world; or, if life be continued, I may possibly be removed to a very great distance from you. This is entirely in the hand of the Sovereign disposer of all events, and with him I would cheerfully leave it. I hope to have the great pleasure of seeing you often. Yet it may be otherwise, even though I should be preserved in life.— There is, however, one unspeakable comfort to you, and to all the saints. Christ, your Almighty Saviour, lives for ever. He is a friend that never will, never can fail those who trust in him. “Cleave to him with full purpose of heart,”* and you will certainly find that he will abide with you, and bless you with his presence, while here; and in a little time, he will “come again, and take you to himself, that where he is, you may be also.”† There will then be no more separations, confusions or disquietudes. There and then you will be “filled with all the fulness of God,” and completely happy in his love, and the fruition

* Acts xi. 23.

† John xiv. 3.

fruition of his presence through the ages of eternity.

But should my life be continued, brethren, it will undoubtedly be the joy of my heart to hear of the steadfastness and holy fervor, with which you retain your esteem for our adorable Saviour, and his truth and interest. This will be the best tidings I can hear of you. To hear this will be the delight of my soul, wherever my lot is cast on earth. To hear that you are increased and grown rich in the possessions of this world; to hear that you are applauded of men, is a mere trifle, compared with hearing of your *spiritual* welfare. It is indeed pleasing to be attended with great numbers, and to have your assemblies crowded.—But even this will give little satisfaction to *my* mind, as it will be of small advantage to *you*, compared with what the apostle here so warmly recommends. To hear this of you will greatly contribute to my comfort in life; and, I am persuaded, will greatly increase my joy in the hour of death. And, if it would not be too bold to form a conjecture of this kind, I will venture to add, that should I be called to heaven, where I humbly hope, through infinite mercy, to enjoy an everlasting abode; and should those angels whom your heavenly Father appoints

appoints to be your "ministering spirits,"* while here on earth; should these angels report your prosperity in heaven, which, I apprehend, is no way improbable, I cannot but imagine this report would make an addition to my pleasure and joy in those inconceivably delightful mansions. Oh! my beloved brethren! my "heart is enlarged" towards you. Let me have joy of you in the Lord! Suffer me to hope; suffer me to persuade myself, that you will "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

In this hope, I proceed to consider the latter part of my text, and the excellencies which our apostle desires to see, or to hear of, among the Philippians, and which I beg leave to recommend to you, with tenderness and affection.—We shall find them to be

UNANIMITY, STEDFASTNESS, and ZEAL.

1. UNANIMITY. "One spirit, with one mind." It may here be proper to observe, that however desirable, it can scarcely be rationally expected that any

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* Heb. i. 14.

community, so numerous as you are, should always be exactly of the same judgment; or have exactly the same choice and wish, in every little circumstance, about which the scripture is not express and particular. And this appears necessary to be remembered by you all, that you may never unhappily “bite and devour one another,” or indulge that propensity to *vain jangling*, which, alas! hath often been too prevalent among professors of religion. And if you keep this observation in mind, it may serve to meliorate your spirits and tempers one towards another, when you come to converse on these inferior and circumstantial subjects, and happen to differ in your thoughts concerning them. In order to effect this happy purpose, I will venture to mention a few of the sources from whence these differences in judgment are likely to arise, and to give you a few such advices as will, I apprehend, be serviceable to you, when matters of this kind come under your consideration.

Happy would it be if real honesty were always found among the professors of christianity. This would prevent many differences; and if differences should happen, it would teach those who differ, to converse and hear with candor and openness

ness of mind. Nevertheless, it must, I think, be allowed that such lesser diversities of judgment may happen, even where persons are really upright; and that from such causes as the following:

1. From the very great disparity in natural capacities, which is undeniably evident even among good men themselves. Some are naturally brisk and lively in thinking; while others are naturally dull, slow, stupid, and lethargic. Some are possessed of great sagacity, and capable of deep penetration; while others can hardly go below the very surface of a subject.—Some persons proceed in an awkward manner, hardly to be described in words, as if it were most agreeable to their genius ever to begin at the wrong end of the subject: While others can with all the ease imaginable, take a fundamental maxim; or proposition; or apply themselves to a general rule, and deduce the particular ones from it, and apply them to their several purposes; and proceed with regularity, light and pleasure, through all the several gradations of an argument, or theme, till every thing be made as plain as the nature of the subject will admit.

In these, and in almost innumerable other instances, the difference of natural capacity is very great among men, as it

were easy to shew at large, were this a proper time, and place for it. And from hence a difference of judgment, especially in matters of intricacy and difficulty is almost unavoidable.

2. The prejudices of education are very strong and prevalent, and too often mingle themselves with our thoughts and reasonings, even in the sacred and awful concerns of religion. According as we have been accustomed to hear and talk *formerly*, we are strangely apt to think *now* on subjects that lie before us. These prejudices frequently prevail too far before we are aware of their influence. And it is a difficult matter to shake them off even when we are apprehensive of their prevalence. As persons, therefore, have been taught differently in childhood and youth; it is not to be wondered at, if they think and reason differently in riper years. Hence it follows that when we consult upon a subject concerning which the scripture is not clear and express, there is need of great care and caution, lest these different preconceptions be the cause of contention in the church of Christ. Many unhappy discords in the churches of Rome and Corinth about meats and days appear to have arisen from these education-prejudices.*

* These are blamed by the apostle, Rom. xiv.
1 Cor. viii.

3. Our different connections in life, the different company we are conversant with, and the different modes of thinking and speaking, among such company, are frequently the cause of diversity in judgment on sacred subjects : and where the mind is not laborious to examine things closely, will frequently have a lasting influence, especially concerning those matters in which the scripture is not full and express. Your neighbours, your shop-mates, and other familiars speak of things as they have heard and learnt. Different traditions have been handed down, in neighbourhoods and families, from one generation to another, arising from a great variety of incidents, not needful to be here mentioned, and, through the darkness and corruption of the human mind, have been embraced, and taken deep root, and sometimes prevailed almost imperceptably.— Now young persons, and those of less discernment, and weaker capacities, especially, and those whose genius is more indolent, contract these different habits, views and modes, whether right or wrong ; and without watchfulness and caution, they read the scriptures, hear the word preached, and consult on divine things under the power of these prejudices. It is very natural to suppose, from hence, that their

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thought.

thoughts of men will be different, on the same subjects, in consequence of these different connections, and may, for a considerable time, perhaps to the end of life, thus continue, where there is not some plain and positive passage of scripture to determine the point in question. Those who are conversant with others on religious topics, often find this to be the case in fact. And it is the business and design of Satan, the enemy and destroyer of mankind, to take the advantage of these things, and to make them the seeds of contention in the churches of christ; and hereby to imbitter the minds of professors one against another; of whom it would be well for us to be always aware, that we may guard against this and all his other wiles and stratagems.

4. Different authors are read by different persons; and as the views of these different authors, on the same subject, are often contrary to one another, the readers of them will naturally imbibe different sentiments concerning the same thing. Authors themselves have derived various prejudices from education, and connections in life; and are seldom entirely free from the influence of these prejudices in their writings. And it is very common for readers, especially young persons, and those

those of weaker capacities, to conceive and speak as the authors do whose works they have read.

Sometimes the same author is approved by one, and disapproved by another, and both these members of the same church. Thus different sentiments are transfused into the breasts of different persons in the same community; these different sentiments are suggested when the subject happens to come under consideration, suspicions of error or heresy are indulged; the tempers of the opposers too frequently grow warm; contention arises, and the peace of the community is injured. I may add, this is more frequently the case among bold men, who have scarcely begun to think with attention and freedom; and it often proceeds to a very great degree, if there be not a prudent minister, or some other person of influence in the church, who may decide the controversy, or put a stop to the debate.

5. Some persons have not only better capacities, but also much more opportunity for reading and meditation than others have; and they have both read, and heard, and thought a great deal more than many of their brethren. Their situation, age, freedom from worldly cares, long standing in the church, and other similar

circumstances may be assigned as reasons for this. Now while one has read, and heard, and thought much, and another has had but little opportunity for these exercises, it is not to be wondered at, if they form different conceptions of the same subject, where the scripture is not very express and full; but particular directions are chiefly included in, and therefore to be derived from, general rules. At the same time, it may happen, and sometimes doth happen, that those who are young, lately converted, and little acquainted with scripture, and but little employed in close meditation, yet are lively in conception, and bold and free in expression, will advance, and strenuously maintain that, which, if they had digested things better, would appear even to themselves, in its own colours of error, folly, and ridicule. Those who are more wise and thoughtful, find it necessary to speak differently. This, if care be not taken, opens a way for opposition and contention.

6. In the same religious society there are generally persons of very different tastes and inclinations, as well as of different capacities. There are some who take a particular *pleasure* in reading and meditating on divine subjects. It is their meat and their drink to be thus employed.—

Others

Others neither appear to see the importance, nor feel the sweetness of such employment. Their minds are not studious at all; but are perpetually volatile and rambling from thing to thing. And when such subjects happen to be the topic of conversation, these loose thinkers will discover their ignorance to those who have thought more closely; and yet, perhaps, will be as pert and positive as if they had searched every think to the very bottom, and seen every argument through and through. Those who have been more attentive and considerate find it necessary to oppose, and hence, without great care, prudence and meekness, another way is opened for animosity and wrangling.

7. Once more; different persons are generally more or less interested in the matter that comes under consideration, and the several circumstances of it; and this interest will sway them, unless they be watchful, towards the one or the other side of the point in question. Perhaps they have before time expressed their sentiments respecting it, and they must still abide by the same opinion, lest they should appear too much like a changeling. Perhaps they or their friends may sustain some disadvantage, or be obliged to bear their cross, if the matter should take this or the other.

other turn. Too often personal resentment will excite contradiction. These and many other inducements will bias the mind, awaken opposition, and rouse the passions to a flame. They will call forth every thing that looks like the shadow of an argument; and sometimes unhappily imbitter the spirits even of brethren in the gospel, one against another. So weak a creature is man, and so necessary is caution, even in the management of our Redeemer's dearest interests and concerns.

YOU will recollect, brethren, that I have an eye. in all these observations, to those cases respecting the worship, order and discipline of a christian church, or the particular duties of the members of it, in some special circumstances, wherein the scripture does not appear to give express and positive directions; but lays down such general rules, as if well understood, and duly attended to, will answer every valuable purpose, for your comfort, prosperity, and advancement in holiness.—Such cases do, and will occur; and one great concern when they do occur, is, to be “all of one mind, with one spirit.” In order to which, I beg leave to offer you the following advices.

1. Make not too much of these *comparatively indifferent* matters. Had they been
of

of very great weight, the God of wisdom and love would not have left us so much in the dark about them. He takes no pleasure in the perplexity of his children. He will most assuredly abide by his own rule; and would have us, at all times, to keep it in view. "Secret things belong to the Lord our God, and things that are revealed belong to us and to our children."† So that we need not be very anxious about what is not revealed to us, and made quite clear in the sacred oracles.

2. In all consultations upon the subjects referred to above, examine yourselves whether you be not influenced by some of the prejudices I have mentioned above, or by others of a similar kind. For if you be, they will lead you to partiality, and consequently quite unfit you for consultation and debate upon any matter which relates to the kingdom of our God and Saviour. No one is qualified for this, whose whole heart does not say "thy will be done." He who does not regard a conformity to the will of Christ, as infinitely preferable to the suiting of his own inclination or interest, can never be likely to demonstrate that disinterested regard for the truth, power, and purity of christianity, which is absolutely necessary, in all
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† Deut. xxix. 29.

who would not “do the work of the Lord *deceitfully*.”* It is necessary, therefore, that you exercise a holy severity over yourselves, and determine to be divested of every bias; otherwise you are in danger of being injurious, rather than advantageous to the interests of our blessed Redeemer.

3. In all meetings for consultation respecting any particular affair that relates to the worship, order, discipline, or purity of the church, be all of you careful to put yourselves, as much as may be in the place of each other. Let our Saviour’s *golden rule* be ever before all your eyes. “As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.”§ This will prevent you from bearing too hard upon each other: It will teach you to be tender, gentle, and kind, to “bear one another’s burthens,”† and to “be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor, preferring one another.”‡ When you have learnt these important lessons well, and learnt each to esteem others better than himself,|| you will find that it has a happy and powerful tendency to mortify that pride, and self-love, which, though often too prevalent, are the bane of genuine

* Jer. xlviii. 10. § Mat. vii. 12. † Gal. vi. 1.

‡ Rom. xii. 10. || Phil. ii. 3.

genuine christianity, and very destructive of that impartiality without which nothing is likely to be done right in the affairs of religion.

4. "Be all of you subject one to another, and be cloathed with humility."* Let none of you ever assume authority over the meanest member in the church. For though, as we shall see in the next advice, the younger are under special obligations to submit to the elder, yer none is warranted to *claim* a superiority over the rest. "You have *one Master*, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."§ Humility and condescension are great ornaments to the christian character; and of special advantage to the church of God. But where pride and self-approbation prevail, they produce an abominable offspring, "envying and strife;" the ruinous effects of which are, "confusion and every evil work."† Where persons "have ways of their own," and are resolved to "yield to no other," and such persons are encouraged in their self-will and stupidity; the consequence to be expected is, first, the *confusion*, and after that the *ruin* of the whole community. Such persons and such tempers as these cannot safely be tolerated in any society whatever, whether civil, political,

1 Pet. v. 5. § Mat. xxiii. 8. † Jam. iii. 16.

tical, or sacred ; and least of all in a sacred society. A very small share of common sense is sufficient to evince the truth of this. And let me exhort you all to keep it in mind. And if you would act a rational part, if you would discover a reverential regard to our dear Lord and Master, if you wish well to the interests of his church, be ever willing to “submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God,”* and be continually ready to sacrifice your own humors and inclinations at the feet of each other, and wish nothing, desire nothing, but the prosecution of that, which after cool and serious deliberation, shall appear best to the whole community, or such part of it, as appear most qualified to judge in the case in question.

5. Take care, especially, that you who are “younger submit yourselves to the elder” members of the church. § Both nature and scripture dictate the propriety of this. It is natural to expect that *elder* people will be more steady in their minds, and will think more coolly, than those who are *young*, in general do. They have read the scriptures more frequently, and with more deliberation and care, than the younger can be supposed to have done.— They have heard the scriptures explained
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* Ephes. v. 21. § 1 Pet. v. 5.

more frequently too, and have conversed longer and oftener about the several doctrines and duties contained and enjoined in them ; and, one would hope, have entered more fully into the meaning and spirit of them than those who are less advanced in years, and have not been long acquainted with religion. Not to mention, that, as in case of difference in judgment, there must be a submission in some things, for the sake of unanimity, on one side or the other ; nothing can be more natural and reasonable than for the younger to submit to the aged, rather than the aged to those who are young.

6. When matters of difficulty in which the scriptures are not fully decisive, come under consideration, and cannot be determined to the entire satisfaction of all the community, another direction of the apostle seems to be necessary for the peace and harmony of the whole church.—“Obey them that have the rule over you, and *submit* yourselves.”* Let the subject, in all such doubtful cases, be referred to, and considered and decided by the elders, or other offices in the church ; and all the other members acquiesce in their determination. They have, more particularly, the care of the church committed to them.

* Heb. xiii. 17.

them. They are obliged by their office, to be more immediately concerned for its prosperity and welfare. They are especially accountable to God, for the high trust committed to them. It is most reasonable to suppose they are best qualified to consult about it, and to determine what is most scriptural and beneficial with respect to it. If they have not qualifications superior to the rest of their brethren, and if the churches welfare do not appear to lie near their hearts, why do you allow them to sustain these offices? If the church have voluntarily given the reins of government into their hands, they ought undoubtedly to act in character, and in all doubtful cases, to submit to their decision.

7. If any darkness or perplexity still remain, and all your minds have not full satisfaction in the decisions at any time given, or the methods pursued, in these less important and more difficult matters, allow each other full liberty to act, as an individual, in that manner which he apprehends to be most pleasing to God.—Take the advice of the great apostle, on a similar occasion, “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him.”*—

Let

* Rom. xiv. 3.

Let every one be conscientious, and act as he is "persuaded in his own mind," he can best answer it to the great judge of all, "at his appearance, and his kingdom;" and be aware of condemning or censuring one another, while you all appear to act from a good conscience towards God. Remember that every one of you must "stand or fall to his own master." And we must all "give an account of ourselves," "in a little time, to him who is ready to judge both the quick and the dead." And thus, "walk in love, as Christ hath loved you, and given himself for you;" and "be at peace among yourselves."

HOWEVER, in these less explicit and less important matters, and amidst the darkness and perplexity which may at any time attend them, you may still be "of one mind," in many respects, and maintain that unanimity and harmony, which will greatly contribute to the happiness and prosperity of the whole. In order to promote which, I also beg leave to advise you in the following manner.

Unite in making the holy scripture your *only rule*, so far as you can understand it, and so far as it relates to any case you at any time have in hand. Never knowingly
admit

admit of a deviation from it, whatever be the consequence, or whatever be the custom of others round about you, or of any with whom you are acquainted. As the word of God is completely sufficient to "make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,"* never venture to make any addition to it, lest the Lord "reprove you, and you be found liars" before him. Let no pre-conceived notions of policy or propriety, let no desire to resemble your ancestors or your neighbours or acquaintance, by any means divert you from this. Let every thing be brought directly "to the law and to the testimony,"§ and rest entirely satisfied in the decision of *that*, and act accordingly. This is having "no Master but one, even Christ;" and if you be all united in this resolution, and unanimous in pursuing this method, you cannot fail to find it much more easy to be united in every important article both of faith and of practice. You have no perfect example besides the Lord Jesus Christ; you have no infallible test of right and wrong but his word. Keep your eyes then, at all times, invariably upon that, and you are in no danger of being materially wrong.

Again; be unitedly determined to read
and

* 2 Tim. iii. 17. § Isai. viii. 20.

and "*search* the scriptures,"* with all the diligence and attention of which you are capable, in order to be well acquainted with the mind of your blessed Lord and Master. Make the scriptures "your meditation day and night,"† that you may not be ignorant of any branch of duty: that you may neither be at a loss to practise it yourselves, nor to admonish and exhort one another respecting it. Thus your minds will be furnished with directions suited to every case; and you will find this to be one very effectual method, whereby "the whole body will be fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."§

Unite in *consulting* on every necessary subject, with candor and a teachable disposition, and a thankful readiness to receive instruction of each other, especially of your minister, whenever it can be given you. Never omit a meeting of this kind, if it can be avoided, lest you thereby lose that instruction which may be for your advantage all your life to come. And never come with a conceited opinion that you are right before hand. This both unfits

* John v. 39. † Psal, i. 2. § Ephes. iv. 16.

suits you for conviction and conversation ; and discourages others in speaking on the subject with due freedom ; and is therefore a barrier against the propagation of truth among you. Be resolutely and invariably determined not to conclude on the matter, even in your own mind, till you have heard all that can be said about it. A foolish awkward conceit, that you are certainly right already, though very common in some persons, is one way to be always wrong, and one very probable argument that you are so. Beware of this temper, therefore, as it lays you open to the attacks and snares of your grand enemy, and is not only very prejudicial to individuals, but to the whole society. For “ where no counsel is, the people fall ; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”*

Farther ; be *unitedly* determined to pursue what is scriptural, when you find it to be so, and are satisfied with respect to it, whatever opposition be made against it, or whoever is profane enough to deride you for it. Remember once again, you must “ stand or fall to your own Master,”§ and therefore let no other have any influence over you. A fondness of being “ conformed to the world,”† has, in all ages, been

* Prov. xi. 14. § Rom. xiv. 4. † Rom. xii. 2.

been the bane of true, genuine, primitive christianity; and it is an invariable rule, by which we may judge of ourselves, that if we are seeking "to please men, we are not the servants of Christ."* Be all determined, then, to be unanimous in making the sacred oracles your only guide in every part of doctrine, of discipline, of worship and practice.

While you are thus united, brethren, in your close attention to the infallible word of truth, you will scarcely be at a loss for *particular* directions, in every circumstance of weight and importance.— But if you should not be always able to recollect a *particular* direction in any supposable case that may come under consideration, which I grant, may very possibly happen, and has been admitted above; yet I am persuaded you will find such *general* directions, as, even in these instances, will preserve you from all animosity, if you will but take care to be unanimous in paying regard to them. I here mention *four* of these *general* directions, and leave them to your meditation, as it is more than time I should dismiss this subject.— The *four general* rules are these.—“Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”§ “Let all things

* Gal. i. 10. § 1 Cor. x. 31.

things be done to edifying.* “Let all things be done decently and in order.” § “Let all your things be done with charity,” i. e. with *love*. † If I am but happy enough to “hear of your affairs,” my dearly beloved brethren, and to obtain evidence, that you are, “with one mind, and in one spirit,” studying and practising all these directions, I shall rejoice in assurance that peace and tranquility will abound among you; and consequently, that you will continue to be a prosperous people. I hasten to consider the

SECOND excellency, which the apostle wishes to hear of, among the Philippians; and that is *stedfastness*; “that ye *stand fast* in one spirit.” This I must dispatch with greater brevity.

It is my opinion that this expression, *stand fast*, may, with safety and propriety, be applied either to your resolute continuance in love and unity, or to your steady adherence to truth and duty, ‡ while you maintain this love and unity. The phrase appears to be a metaphor taken from the practice of the ancient wrestlers in the Olympic games, who were particularly careful, lest their antagonists should push or

* 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

1 Cor. xvi. 14.
in loc.

§ 1 Cor. xiv. 4.

† εν αγαπη

‡ Vid. Zanchium apud polum

* 570

or remove them from their ground, to a more disadvantageous situation, in order more effectually to obtain the victory, and thereby gain the prize.*

Always keep it in mind, brethren, that, if you be diligently engaged for God, you have an old subtle enemy to encounter, who is therefore called "your adversary, the Devil;" and is contriving every stratagem, and laying every scheme, by which he can do you an injury. And if he can either divide you among yourselves, and enrage you one against another, or divert any of you from "the truth as it is in Jesus," one grand point is gained, towards accomplishing his infernal designs.

But it may be added also "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, are inimical to your *steadfastness* in both the senses I have just now mentioned. And alas! the best of men have so many imperfections and corruptions in themselves, ready to admit, and even unite with, the outward adversaries of our peace, holiness and comfort; to "separate very friends," and to divert us from the "word of truth," and the path of duty, that it is peculiarly necessary to be daily on our guard against them; and continually to "watch and pray,"

* *synesis*. Verbum athletic convenit, a quibus sumpta est translatio. Beza in loc.

pray," left in these, as well as other respects, we should "enter into temptation."

Evil surmisings and suspicions, and even quite ungrounded ones, are too common, and fact shews that they are strangely ready to arise, on a thousand occasions. A supposed shy look, a word spoken, that is apprehended to be unkind, a becoming brotherly freedom in admonition or reproof, and a vast number of other incidental circumstances are too frequently the trivial occasions of resentments, and in the end, of oppositions, and even separations in the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Against all these evils, I earnestly exhort you to be continually on your guard. Remember nothing will excuse you in the neglect of "endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," or of using every proper method you can think of, for preserving and promoting love and harmony among yourselves. It is your duty, and it is mine, and it will be the honor and happiness of us all to *stand fast* and persevere in this endeavour, to the last hour of our abode on earth. I might easily proceed to enlarge much on this signification of the phrase, and illustrate and enforce the duty of stedfastness considered

considered in this view of it : But having dwelt too long on the subject under the former head, I here leave it ; and proceed *briefly*, to recommend *christian steadfastness*, as it signifies your *persevering* adherence to every branch of truth and duty.

Many things, brethren, have a tendency to make you unstable, though as christians, you are engaged in the best of causes, and though it is of such infinite consequence that you steadily abide by it. "The fear of man bringeth a snare ;"* and it is awfully evident, many have been caught by it, to their own destruction. — You are warned of it by your only Saviour, and everlasting friend. "Fear not them," says he, "who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."§ Worldly interests are strong and amazingly prevalent ; though alas ! they are worth very little ; for "riches profit not in the day of wrath,"† could they be enjoyed to the end of life. But there is no assurance of them to the possessor, even in this world. They are only a *shadowy* possession ; a "thing that is not ;" and very often "make themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle towards

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wards

* Prov. xxix. 25. § Mat. x. 28.

† Prov. xi. 4.

wards heaven.”* So that they cannot possibly yield any solid comfort either in life or death. And yet, such is our depravity and folly, that there is continual necessity to watch against them, lest they divert the mind from Christ, and lead you to act deceitfully to the things of God, and to forsake some part of his truth, or some branch of duty, in order to preserve or obtain them; and thus bring you to the most shameful and most painful experimental proof that “they who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Should this be the unhappy case, brethren, with any one of you, the time will certainly come, when the throbbing anguish of a guilty conscience will teach you in a dreadful, but most effectual manner, that “the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after,” (God forbid that any of my present audience should be of the number!) “they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”§

The friendship of men, the attachments that proceed from many connections in life, the difficulties that attend the way of truth, and the self-denial so absolutely neces-

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

§ 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

necessary in order to walk in it, with many other things in this corrupt and ensnaring world, have also too often the same fatal tendency, to divert the mind from the truth of God, or discourage those who make a profession of it. But I must not here enlarge on them. I therefore only observe in general, that you must fight and conquer, or you must die. For "if any man draw back," saith the Lord of life and glory, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And the feeblest of you need not be discouraged; for he who is "able to save you to the uttermost," assures you that "his grace is sufficient for you."* And he gives you most "precious promises," to animate and cheer you in your spiritual warfare; and with infinite condescension, declares, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."§ *Stand fast* then, brethren, in the name and strength of your Almighty Saviour! "*Stand fast* in the faith; quit you like men; be strong."† Though your enemies be numerous and powerful; your Saviour is infinitely superior to them all; and, cleaving to him, you shall soon find to your inexpressible joy, that your

G 2

spiritual

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. § Rev. iii. 21. † 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

spiritual warfare shall end in an everlasting triumph over all your enemies; and with crowns on your heads, and palms in your hands, you shall sing victory! victory! to the praise of God and the Lamb for ever and ever.

In order to this, take care to be frequently reviewing, and meditating on those parts of scripture which assert the chief and fundamental doctrines of christianity; that is, such as particularly respect your eternal happiness; and those places of scripture which particularly enjoin the duties of christianity, in order that you may not, at any time, lose sight of them, and so be taken unawares by any adversary. For if these truths and duties, or the scriptures on which they are founded be not kept in memory, an opposer may, perhaps, in an unguarded hour, almost baffle you, and laugh you out of that which is the chief support of your minds, and comfort, and guide, and honor of your life.

“ I declare unto you the gospel,” says the great apostle, “ which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye **KEEP IN MEMORY** what I preached unto you.”* “ Therefore, we ought

* 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.

ought to give the more *earnest heed* to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should **LET THEM SLIP.**"* Lest we should let them slip out of our minds, and so not be prepared to vindicate our attachment to them, and profession of them, on all proper occasions; and lest we should *forget* to reduce them to those grand and important purposes of comfort and holiness which they are so directly calculated to subserve.

Remember that of yourselves, you are weak and feeble creatures, you are "not sufficient of yourselves to think any thing as of yourselves; but your sufficiency is of God."† But "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."§ Be steadfastly attentive then, to every opportunity of waiting on the Lord in his ordinances, and look to him by faith in them, that he may bless and strengthen you according to his good word, and that hereby you may grow stronger and stronger; that you may boldly and honourably "continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel."† Alienation from God, and from his truth and ways, seems generally, if not always to begin at the heart, and

G 3

this,

— * Heb. ii. 1.

† 2 Cor. iii. 5.

§ Mai. xl. 31.

† Col. i. 23.

this, in the neglect of deriving spiritual life and strength from him in his ordinances. Thus the honor of God and his truth become indifferent things. We begin to consider the truth only, or chiefly, as the distinguishing notion of a party ; and in consequence of this, are willing to change it for a trifle. And if any prospect present itself to us either of worldly advantage by parting with it, or of disadvantage by retaining it, it soon becomes apparent, alas ! how cheap divine truth is, then, in our esteem. I fear it will appear, at the great trying day, that the dreadful apostacies which every age has probably been witness to, have originated here. Be diligent, then, brethren, by all means, in waiting on your heavenly Father, and you shall find that “when you cry, he will answer you, and *strengthen* you with *strength* in your souls.”*

In a word ; if you desire to be happy in your own souls ; if you wish to honor your blessed Saviour, and to advance his interest upon earth. If you wish to enjoy a peaceful conscience, and to bear an honourable character on earth, or to lay up treasure in heaven, I earnestly entreat you, through the help of God, who is always ready to give “liberally to all men,” and who

who “upbraideth not,”* to continue steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”§

Let me only add, be each of you earnest at the throne of grace, that God would bless you with steadfastness and stability of mind;—earnestly resolve upon steadfastness; remember it is not a trifle whether you be steadfast or no; but a matter of infinite weight. Admonish one another of, and all keep in mind, your numerous enemies, who will wish to see, and to make you “unstable as water.” Exhort and encourage one another to steadfastness.—And pray for each other daily; and may the God of love, as he hath graciously promised, ever hear, and ever help you, that you may indeed, answer the character of the truly righteous man; “that all of you may “hold on your way;” that you may always have “clean hands,” and continually “grow stronger and stronger.”†

BUT it is not enough for those who would serve Christ faithfully, and promote his interest on earth, and lay up treasure in heaven, to be *unanimous* and *steadfast*, but also to be *vigorous* and **ZEALOUS**. And therefore the apostle adds, “*striving together for the faith of the gospel.*”

G 4

I think

* Jam. i. 5. § Acts ii. 42. † Job xvii. 9.

I think it is evident that "the faith of the gospel," clearly means, in this place, as in several others,* the *doctrine* of the gospel. For this you are to "strive together."

Many things are against the truth of the gospel, and are in danger of ensnaring the indifferent and slothful professors of it; which renders this part of the text particularly necessary to be inculcated and enforced on us all. But I have not time to discuss them at large. Carnal men have, in general, a rooted antipathy against the propagation and promotion of truth in the world, because it always proclaims condemnation against them. It discovers the "sinfulness of sin," and foretells the dreadful condition of the sinner who "goeth on still in his trespasses."§ Its native tendency is to promote true, genuine holiness; for it is a "doctrine according to godliness."† This, the unconverted sinner naturally dislikes; and therefore will take a pleasure, by crafty insinuations, or by open efforts, in overthrowing it if possible. It directly opposes the destructive doctrine of salvation by our own righteousness;‡ than which nothing is,

* Acts vi. 7. Gal. i. 23. 1 Tim. iii. 9, &c. § Psal. lxxviii. 21. † 1 Tim. vi. 3. ‡ See particularly Rom. iii. 4.

is, in general, more agreeable to fallen proud man; and therefore, the world cannot bear it. It glorifies the adorable Redeemer, by shewing that *he* has "brought in everlasting righteousness" for us,* and that we are "made righteous by his obedience:"† But this is so utterly contrary to our natural ideas of self-sufficiency, that there is a settled aversion in the carnal heart against it. It strikes at the root of our carnal interests, and most justly calls for, and shews the reasonableness of, an entire dedication of ourselves, and our all to the God of our salvation, which can never be agreeable to those who are "serving divers lusts and pleasures."‡ It sets Jesus at the head of his church, and allows no master but him only,§ and thereby exposes all the traditions of men, and tumbles them to the ground, as so many idols before the Lord of hosts. But it is much more agreeable to human nature to "be conformed to this world," and to "obey men rather than God." In a word, its original design, and genuine tendency are "to humble the sinner, exalt the Saviour, and promote holiness." And therefore, the inbred corruption of the believer, the "flesh which lusteth against the spirit, and

* Dan. ix. 24.

§ Rom. v. 19.

† Tit. iii. 3.

‡ Mat. xxiii. 8.

and carnal men in general will ever oppose it." So that the "faith of the gospel," is surrounded with both enemies within us, and enemies without us. The necessity of "striving together" for it is, from hence, very apparent. "Striving together," therefore, "for the faith of the gospel." And I trust it will be almost unnecessary, brethren, to shew you here, how important the faith or truth of the gospel is, in every branch of it. In a former discourse I endeavoured to lay this before you at large. I shall only now entreat you, and I do earnestly entreat you to look back to that discourse,* and let what it contains in commendation of the truth, be considered by you, as so many arguments to excite your diligence and zeal in what I am now enforcing.

You will likewise remember, that you are here called not only to exert yourselves for the truth, but to do this *unitedly*. That you unite in it as *with one soul*.§—

"Striving

* See the first discourse, on Zech. viii. 17.

§ It may here be observed, that the removing of a single point in our common Greek copies, which is both done, and vindicated by Beza, suggests the above thought with still more strength and energy; and requires a version a little different from the common one, and in my humble opinion more pertinent to the apostle's design, *μια ψυχη συναθλοντες*. *Uno pariter animo decertantes*.—Striving together with one soul.—See Beza and Doddridge in loc.

“ Striving *together* for the faith of the gospel.” This union in the exertion of yourselves, will give strength and firmness to the whole body, and hereby render your endeavours more happy, and more vigorous, and through the blessing of God, more successful. You must strive in the support and propagation of the truth, like the wrestlers in the ancient Grecian games, as the word here signifies ; and stand firm one by another in this strife, and the God of love and truth will succeed, and crown and reward your labors.

Here I exhort you to recollect the advices I have given you in the first of these discourses.* Endeavour to be well *acquainted* with the faith of the gospel in every part of it, and to be well *established* in it. When you speak on gospel-subjects be scrupulously careful to “ speak as the oracles of God.” Resolutely *abide* by it, and *adhere* to it, whatever you suffer by it. Be *valiant* for it. Give all the assistance you can in every christian and scriptural attempt to propagate and extend it. Endeavour, with *prudence* and *meekness*, to convert those to the *truth* who *err* from it ; especially, in the most important branches of it. And adorn it by a holy temper and conversation. In all these endeavours,
brethren,

* See Page 36, &c.

brethren, and in every other, take care to be firmly united, as the heart of one man. Read, meditate, pray, and consult one another on the most proper methods of supporting the truth, and spread that gospel which I trust, is the life and joy of your own souls, and which is, invariably, "the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth."

Thus my beloved brethren, I have finished my advices to you, in general; and I have not time for a more particular address to the several classes among you. I will therefore leave with each in this audience, a passage or two of scripture, which I beseech you to keep in mind; and hasten to dismiss you.

Ye careless sinners, who have heard long, but are yet inattentive. What will you do when the God of truth, whom you have hitherto slighted, fulfills the following threatening, in consigning you to everlasting misery and despair? "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched forth my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress
and

and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”*

Ye who are not quite careless, but are, in some measure, awakened in your consciences, and begin to wish for the happiness which the God of love exhibits. Remember the following words, as the words of God, and not of man. Ho, “every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. The spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth, say come; and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”†

Ye who are discouraged by reason of your sins. Remember that the “Amen, the faithful and true witness,” hath graciously said, “him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” Come, now, and let us together, faith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.§

H

Young

* Prov. i. 24—29. † Isai. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17.
§ Joh. vi. 37. Isai. i. 18.

Young and feeble believers. Remember what is said of your kind and tender Saviour, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."*

Ye who are advanced in years and grace. Remember, that "we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."§

Ye backsliders. Remember, "it had been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after ye have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you."†

You who stand in different relations to one another. Remember the special duties incumbent on each. "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord."‡ Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling,

* Isai. xl. 11. § Rom. xv. 1. † 2 Pet. ii. 21.

‡ Col. iii. 19, 20, 21.

bling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ."* Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven."§

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."†—Now, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. AMEN."‡

* Ephes. vi. 4, 5.

§ Col. iv. 1.

† Phil. iv. 8.

‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

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